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Quarterly Series

FORTIETH VOLUME

The Life of
The Venerable Father
Claude de la Colombière

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The Life of The Venerable Father Claude de la Colombière

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

Abridged from the French Life by

EUGENE SEGUIN

OF THE SAME SOCIETY

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SINE DOLORE

NON VIVITUR

IN AMORE

(*Thomas à Kempis*)

PREFACE.

THE LIFE OF FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE which is contained in this volume is entirely taken from the French biography by Père Seguin. The translation appeared some years ago in a Catholic periodical, and is at times somewhat free. In the present volume some chapters, not strictly biographical, have been omitted, partly in order to lessen the bulk of the work, partly because the Sermons and Letters of Father de la Colombière are but little known in this country.

The object of the Editor in the present publication has been simply to furnish to English-reading Catholics a clear and comprehensive narrative of the life of a very holy man, who was specially devoted to the propagation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord. It would have been far more satisfactory to write an original Life, and to illustrate it by, at least, copious extracts from the Letters and Sermons of Father de la Colombière. But it is important, at the present moment, when there is much hope that the cause of the Beatification of this Venerable Father may be successfully urged on, that a simple Life

should be at once accessible amongst us. The author of the work, here translated and abridged, has spared no pains to ascertain all the facts of Father de la Colombière's life, and his authority is quite sufficient to ensure the accuracy of his statements.

English Catholics have a special interest both in the devotion to the Sacred Heart and in the career of Father de la Colombière. He was the first to introduce that devotion into England, and his spiritual child, Queen Mary Beatrice, was among the first to petition the Holy See for the institution of the Feast of the Sacred Heart. It is much to be regretted that the condition of Catholics in this country, during the last decades of the seventeenth century, was such as to make it extremely difficult for us to discover any considerable traces of the presence of Father de la Colombière at the English Court. There may be many documents hidden in private archives, which may some day throw more light on this, to us, most interesting portion of his life. For the present we must be content with what we have, and the object of this publication will be abundantly attained, if English Catholics are roused thereby, either to a greater intensity of devotion to the Sacred Heart, or to practical exertion in promoting the "cause" of the Beatification of the holy religious man who introduced that devotion into our country.

H. J. C.

Manchester: Feast of the Transfiguration, 1883.

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CHAPTER I.

Early years of Claude de la Colombière.

1641—1659.

ST. SYMPHORIEN D'OZON is a town between Lyons and Vienne, having active industrial relations with both these cities. Blessed with a mild, healthy climate and fertile soil, surrounded by graceful hills, and watered by the river Ozon flowing between wooded banks, the appearance of St. Symphorien is very attractive. The ruins of an ancient fortress, the remains of whose moat and ditch now form the public promenade, confirm the local tradition that it was once a place of some military strength. In 1238 this district was held by Peter of Savoy, who, the better to retain his grasp of a fief entirely surrounded by the lands of the Dauphin, constructed a line of ramparts flanked by eight towers, the highest of which bore the significant name of "Who shall defy?" On August 25, 1355, St. Symphorien ceased to form part of the territory of Savoy. Ravaged during the religious wars, it fell in 1567 into the hands of the terrible Baron des Adrets, by whose troops it was occupied for three months. Among the other calamities of that disastrous year, the Calvinists set fire to the church, and melted the organ pipes into bullets. The royal troops, however, commanded by the Count de Maugiron, compelled them soon afterwards to retire. The fortress having

been dismantled was left to decay, part was removed for the benefit of individuals, and the remainder became a heap of ruins. More peaceful days now dawned, the town freely extended itself across the valley, principally along the high-road from Lyons to Vienne, the industry of the inhabitants rapidly obliterated the ravages of war, the love of all classes for the Catholic faith burnt brighter than ever, the nobles took the lead in noble deeds, and St. Symphorien became a favoured spot, where religion and all its attendant blessings flourished.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century the communal archives contain many distinguished names, such as de Mélat, de Rachais, du Mas de Charconne, de Beauvoir, de Giraud, de Muzzino, de la Colombière, and others. In this last we have naturally a particular interest. Pierre Colombière at that time fulfilled the functions of public notary, and had probably succeeded his father in that office. But as the municipal records previous to the end of the sixteenth century do not exist, we must seek elsewhere for the earlier history of the family. We learn from Guy Allard, the celebrated genealogist of Dauphiny, that the Colombières were of noble Burgundian origin, and established themselves in Dauphiny about 1360. They bore on a shield azure three doves argent, in chief, beaked and clawed, gules.

We find a member of this family in the beginning of the sixteenth century amongst the dignitaries of St. Maurice of Vienne, into whose chapter nobility was a necessary condition of admission.

Pierre de la Colombière had two sons, Henry,

Canon and eventually Archdeacon of Vienne, and Bertrand, who succeeded his father as royal notary in 1630, and about that time bought from the noble Mas de Charconne a mansion in the principal street of the town, not far from the house he already occupied, but larger, and possessing a good-sized close. This was thenceforth his habitual abode. Towards the end of the year 1633 Bertrand de la Colombière married the niece of an old friend, a young and pious lady, an orphan of considerable fortune, "virtuous Margaret Coindat." Their union was blessed with six children. We give their names according to the date of their birth: Humbert, Isabeau, Claude, René, Marguerite, and Joseph. They were all baptized at St. Symphorien, but the registration of each has not been equally well kept.

The vicar, or rather perpetual curate, discharging the duties of parish priest, M. Bascon, was, as we see by the drawing up of certain requests to the Parliament of Grenoble touching the repairs of his church, a man of cultivated mind, but he was old and infirm, and to this must be ascribed the neglected state of his registers. He terminates that for 1641 with the words, "Other children besides the above were baptized, whose names, owing to failing health, I have omitted." Indeed, we owe the record of Claude de la Colombière's baptism to an afterthought of M. Bascon's, for between April 8, 1641, and the month of October in that year, a considerable hiatus, the result of an accident, occurs. He subsequently recalls to mind that he has baptized several children of noble birth, and tries, a little at haphazard, to repair the unfortunate omission. Having notified the baptism

of Nicolas de Reclaine, M. Bascon continues: "*Item.* Claude (or Claudius), son of Sieur Bertrand Colombier (de la Colombière) and of Dame Margaret Coindat, the sponsors being M. le Comte (Claude) de Maugiron and the wife of Counsellor Puthod." Both the date and all other particulars are wanting. The register has evidently been corrected in the briefest possible manner; the names of the godfather and godmother are given, but not those of the other assistants at the ceremony. In recording the baptism of Humbert, the eldest child of M. Bertrand de la Colombière, M. Bascon tells us that the nobles, Jacques du Mas de Charconne, Governor of St. Symphorien, Pierre de Mélat and Pierre de Beauvoir were present. We may therefore conclude that some of the members and friends of the family assisted on this occasion, but the good old priest, making up his registers as concisely as possible, gives us none but essential details. He assures us, indeed, of the fact of Claude's baptism, but leaves us in ignorance of either the year, the month, or the day of its celebration, which last was probably, as the sponsors were near neighbours, that of the birth of the child.

To clear up this omission we must therefore have recourse to another source of information, and such is happily before us. An ancient document of the close of the seventeenth century, containing a list of the Jesuits of the Province of Lyons, gives us the day, the month, and the year of Claude de la Colombière's birth. This child so highly blessed was born on February 2, 1641, the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin. Thus on the anniversary of that day, when the

Eternal Son, clothed in our humanity, offered Himself to His Father in the Temple of Jerusalem, the soul of this little child, cleansed by the waters of Baptism, was presented to God. Can we doubt that the Immaculate Virgin, moved by the prayers of a mother dedicating her son to God, bent a glance of maternal love on the unconscious infant, and obtained for him the favour of a special blessing? The sponsors were worthy of their god-child. M. de Maugiron (from whom his name of Claude was taken), Count of Montléans, colonel of a regiment of cavalry, Governor of Vienne, served his country with much distinction. He often resided in the immediate neighbourhood of St. Symphorien, at his castle of La Roche, which was surrounded by an extensive demesne. A feeling of strong mutual attachment existed between him and M. de la Colombière, who was indeed on terms of intimacy with all the leading families in those parts, and the Count readily consented to become the godfather of the little Claude.

Nor was the godmother, Anne Coste, daughter of Francis Coste, Comte de Charmes, Comptroller of the Finances, and wife of the noble Jacques Puthod,[1] King's advocate in the Parliament of Grenoble, less illustrious A friendship, founded on mutual esteem, had long united the families of Puthod and La Colombière, and the wife of Counsellor Puthod is spoken of by contemporary writers with a respect worthy of the godmother of

[1] According to an ancient register, the Puthods of St. Symphorien were closely allied to the family of La Colombière. In the chapel of Ste. Claire at Grenoble are two monuments with epitaphs to the memory of Antoine de Puthod and Pierre Antoine de Puthod.

a saint. From the preceding paragraphs it will be seen that the position occupied by Bertrand de la Colombière was, by reason of his wealth, his personal character, and his capacity for business, a most honourable one. But, harassed by the claims of his numerous avocations, he had little time to devote to the education of his children. This duty, always so important a one in the eyes of a Christian parent, devolved therefore almost entirely on Madame de la Colombière. It was hers to train that young mind, into which the Holy Spirit in Baptism had so lately entered, and to develop the character of her little Claude. She nursed her child herself, and kneeling at the foot of his cradle often implored for him the special protection of that loving Saviour, Who deigned, Himself a little Child, to lie cradled on the lap of His Virgin Mother. In Madame de la Colombière a certain natural dignity of bearing was admirably blended with the easy and graceful manners of true modesty. She was gentle yet resolute, and her ardent piety only served to add fresh strength to her maternal love and to inspire more watchful care. She sanctified by her presence and adorned by her virtues that family circle, whose loving interests and peaceful joys she so greatly preferred to the more exciting atmosphere of general society.

Claude was the very counterpart of his mother, inheriting her winning manners and refined tastes. Scarcely had his mind opened to the dawn of reason, when she hastened to teach him the elementary truths of religion. The first words he uttered were the blessed Names of Jesus and Mary, words which never sound sweeter than

when pronounced by the innocent lips of childhood. She soon taught him the simple and beautiful prayers of the Catholic Church, and so early was his intelligence developed that, whilst yet a little child, he would listen with interest whilst she dwelt on the mysteries of Christianity. "The Gospel histories, whilst they open immeasurable expanses and endless perspectives of light to the greatest intellects, adapt themselves equally to the tender capacities of babes." The little Claude, whose mind expanded in the healthy atmosphere of a mother's love, eagerly imbibed these lessons of Divine truth, and the angel of the Lord watched with joy over this child daily invigorated by that grace which is the dew of Heaven.

The natural charms of his character opened like the dawn of a summer's day. His parents were delighted to observe his thoughtful disposition, his instinctive piety, his desire for information, and his respectful behaviour towards themselves.[1] During the Divine Offices he was quiet and attentive, his eyes riveted on the altar, the statues, the pictures, the ceremonies. The church at that time did not possess the statue by M. Tabisch, or the picture of St. Symphorien by Blanchet, which it has since acquired. At eight years old he began to learn history and grammar. In 1650, his father, having given up his legal appointment, was able to devote some hours every day to the instruction of his

[1] We must not proceed further with our narrative without warning our readers that we cannot vouch for the exact authenticity of the documents from which our four first chapters are drawn. Local tradition has often been our guide, but we could not altogether reject these sources of information, which have afforded many interesting details.

children,[1] an employment for which his ability and literary acquirements particularly fitted him. M. Bertrand de la Colombière was most anxious for the advancement of his sons, and aspired to see them filling the positions heretofore held by the elder and then extinct branch of the family. Two of his wife's uncles having been King's Counsellors in the Parliament of Grenoble, he was desirous that one at least of his children should attain that honourable post.[2]

He neglected no opportunity of initiating them in the usages of good society, and of implanting in their minds those noble sentiments which constitute true gentlemen. Often and often did Claude hear from his father's lips the saying of St. Louis to his son Philippe le Hardi, "Love thy good name," and in later years he confessed that he had been early trained in the practice of social courtesies, the observance of honourable traditions, and the art of conciliating men. Rapidly as we should wish to carry the reader over this portion of our history, there are some details respecting this interesting family, which we must crave his permission to insert. The opening of the year 1651 found six children sharing alike the love and solicitude of M. and Madame de la Colombière. But two little flowers, as yet scarcely blown, were

[1] To give an idea of the home education Claude was likely to receive, we must recall the names of one or two of the books which at that time were highly thought of in literary circles; for instance, that of H. d'Urfé, and *La Science Héroique*, *Le Vrai Théâtre de l'Honneur*, par Marc de la Colombière.

[2] The Colombières had rather derogated from their position in adopting the profession of notary. The laws regulating these civil distinctions were in force until 1780.

to be transplanted from this earthly nursery to the Eden above. Isabeau and René died in early childhood. The four others remained to be an unfailing source of comfort and content to their parents. As Holy Writ teaches us, "*The child trained in the way he should go, shall not when he is old depart therefrom.*"[1] Like the Infant Jesus, Claude as he grew in age increased in wisdom, and M. and Madame de la Colombière were gladdened by the amiability of his disposition. Before long they began to think of sending him to College, and, anxious to give him at once the highest moral and intellectual culture, decided on sending him to a Seminary directed by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. The College of the Holy Trinity, in which the Jesuits received children of the upper classes as boarders, had long been established at Lyons. Thus Claude left his father's roof only to enter another family, where, whilst experiencing a care which was truly paternal, he found in the companionship of other boys a stimulus to exertion, and in the discipline of the place a habit of self-control, which were valuable acquirements in his future career. There was at that time in the *pensionnat* of the Holy Trinity, a large gathering of children of noble birth. And amongst the little ones fresh from their mothers' side and in all the innocence of childhood, there was none more charming than Claude de la Colombière, who soon attracted the attention of his teachers by his lively sallies, his remarkable intellect, and his desire to excel. The only event of note in his school career was his

[1] Prov. xxii.

First Communion. The Jesuits, as is well known, spare no pains in preparing their pupils for this great event. Claude, who endeavoured at all times to show himself worthy of their teachings, brought to this solemn act a mind duly impressed with its importance. Full of faith, of hope, of love, he drew near the altar, his heart overflowing with feelings which an angel might have envied.

The pious Archbishop of Lyons, Cardinal Alphonse-Louis de Plessis de Richelieu, anointed the glowing forehead of the boy with holy oil, strengthening him for the duties and dangers of life. Henceforth devoting himself more zealously than ever to his studies, Claude rose rapidly in the school; whilst the fear of God gaining increased power over his mind, preserved him from the snares of vanity and pride. He became a leading member of the sodality established in honour of the Blessed Mary, and sitting at the feet of the pure and humble Virgin, nurtured for love of her the growth of purity and humility within his breast. Father Claude-François Menestrier,[1] of Lyons, "one of the most celebrated professors which that city had produced for centuries," instructed him in rhetoric. The year 1658 gave Father Menestrier an opportunity of making the talents of his beloved pupil known beyond the walls of the College. Louis XIV., when passing through Lyons on the 25th of November in that year, received the visit of the Duke of

[1] Père de Colonia, in his *Literary History of Lyons*, writes: "Father Menestrier was the founder of the Library of the College of the Holy Trinity, which afterwards became that of the City of Lyons. A full length portrait of him still adorns the immense hall of the Library."

Savoy, of his aunt Christine of France, mother of the Duke, and of her daughter, the Princess Margaret. It was announced that the King would honour the Jesuit College with his presence, and the Professor of Rhetoric was instructed to prepare a suitable literary entertainment.[1] It seems very certain that from his natural abilities, the ease with which he delivered himself in public, and his position in the school, that young de la Colombière must have distinguished himself on an occasion when doubtless the encomiums, which are always so freely lavished on young aspirants, were well calculated to flatter the vanity of seventeen.

His thoughts, however, at that time were occupied with a more important subject. He had decided on the career which he wished to pursue, and hoped, his rhetorical course completed, to be allowed to follow the bent of his mind. But his father desiring that he should study philosophy before coming to a fixed determination, he had but to obey. When, therefore, he finally passed with distinction out of College, he had acquired not only a liberal education, but also that love of the highest good which the things of earth cannot satisfy, and that courage which flinches not before the enemy, even when that enemy is oneself. Wiser than his years, he united the prudence of age to the candour of youth, and whilst yet young developed the gifts of maturer life. Happy he who has borne the yoke of the Lord from his earliest days.

[1] He composed a drama called *The Altar of Augustus*, dedicated to Louis the August. Its language as addressed to a monarch not yet twenty-one years old is excessive in its adulation. But such was the custom of the age.

CHAPTER II.

Vocation and Novitiate.

1659—1661.

HAVING finally quitted the Seminary of Lyons, Claude de la Colombière found himself once more in the beloved home of his childhood, on the picturesque banks of the Ozon. His mother's eye, which followed every change the passing years brought in her son, softened as she marked his mental and physical development. At eighteen Claude was of middle height, well-proportioned, and with a delicate but healthy complexion. His carriage was manly and distinguished, his voice clear and harmonious, his countenance refined and thoughtful, his brow lofty, and his fairly regular features lighted up by the vigour of his mind. When the first few days, naturally devoted to the pleasure of meeting and conversing with his family were passed, a very grave question arose or rather pressed for solution in the young man's mind: the time had come when his future career must be decided. More than one path to honour and fortune were open to him; but for a mind with his aspirations the law had no charms, whilst a military career was yet more incompatible with his tastes. The constant changes incident to a soldier's life were ill suited to his student habits,

whilst the licence of camps could not but be displeasing to the seminarist of Lyons. For himself his inclinations favoured the religious life, and his uncle the Canon warmly urged him to embrace what in the phraseology of those days was called *le parti de l'église*. But a cathedral stall would not have suited Claude de la Colombière. He aspired to be engaged in some severe and arduous work in the service of God, and the calm, monotonous life of a Chapter seemed little likely to favour this ambition. He longed to become a missionary, an apostle, a martyr, such was the dream of his inmost soul. His wish to embrace the life of perfection had been fostered in the annual retreats he had attended while at Lyons. Those addresses which spoke of the necessity of giving up everything for the salvation of the soul, of the happiness of those who renounced all to follow Christ, of the beauty of that self-immolation in which we yearn to give our Lord devotion for devotion, had nurtured in his heart this desire. The sublimities of the Catholic faith wooed and fascinated his imagination, and like others before him Claude longed to climb the steep heights of Christian perfection. He knew something of the Jesuits, his good masters, under whose roof he had so long lived. He recognized their virtues, their apostolic zeal, their literary success, and the noble aim which St. Ignatius proposed to himself in instituting the Company whose glorious motto, *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, thrilled his heart with generous enthusiasm. He felt himself drawn towards that holy brotherhood, and confiding his wishes to his mother found her full of sympathy

with his plans, and prepared to bless God, Who had guided his thoughts in that direction. But his aspirations met with a very different reception from his father, who, cautious in his undertakings, and fearing lest his child should be the victim of a passing enthusiasm, had deferred all arrangements as to Claude's future until his son should have finished his college career. But now the decisive moment had arrived, and M. de la Colombière still hesitated, whilst Claude, encouraged by his director, and feeling daily more and more convinced of the reality of his vocation, persevered in his determination. Putting his whole trust in the efficiency of prayer, as he had been advised, he awaited his father's consent with all the patience he could command, looking forward to a fitting occasion for making another ardent appeal on the subject he had so much at heart. M. de la Colombière, although a truly pious man, was for many reasons opposed to his son's vocation. He saw the young man gifted with talents likely to ensure his future success, he had given him the liberal education of a man of the world, and now he found himself asked to relinquish all hopes of seeing him embark in any career of worldly success. This was indeed a hard sacrifice, but what sacrifice is not hard to flesh and blood? That his son should be a priest was not in itself distasteful to M. de la Colombière, the altars of the Church had in the past often been served by those of his name, and her highest honours opened to them. But the Jesuit vow closed the door to future advancement, and hence it was that the father, ambitious for his son, disliked the idea of

his entering their Order. His affairs were at this point when, some days before the close of the vacation, an opportunity for declaring his attachment to the religious life presented itself, of which Claude did not fail to take advantage, and he firmly but respectfully told his father that no earthly consideration would ever alter his determination to embrace that state to which he believed God had called him. "My son," replied M. de la Colombière, "nothing could be farther from my wishes than to oppose aught in which I recognize the will of God; but it is clearly my duty to assure myself that your vocation is such. When I am convinced that it is so I will myself accompany you to the Novitiate."

Claude bent his head before the paternal decision, and encouraged by the secret assurances of his mother that his father's opposition would not be of long continuance, awaited the result in silence.

These anxieties and troubles had but the effect of quickening his devotion, for prayer is the confiding appeal of weakness to strength. Time however was passing, the vacation was drawing to a close, nothing was yet decided, and resignation is of all apprenticeships the hardest to youth.

Claude could no longer conceal his anxiety, care clouded his brow, he became pale and worn. Madame de la Colombière soon noted the change in her beloved son, and fearing lest his health should give way under the mental strain, earnestly entreated her husband no longer to refuse his consent to what might be indeed a holy vocation, prudently remarking that if his aspirations had no solid foundation they would soon vanish before

the hardships of the novitiate, and that if Claude were not fitted for a religious life the Jesuit Fathers would be the first to discover his mistake. At the request of M. de la Colombière, his uncle the Canon and the Curé of St. Symphorien questioned Claude as to his vocation, and both afterwards expressed their approval of the young man's determination, recognizing in it the signs of a Divine call. The father hesitated no longer, but sending for his son, and tenderly embracing the much moved and grateful youth, gave him full liberty to enter on the life to which Heaven had apparently destined him. Claude immediately wrote to the Father Provincial, asking his permission to enter the Novitiate. He was appointed to that of Avignon.[1] A week later, and sorrow filled the house of M. de la Colombière at St. Symphorien. The moment of separation had arrived. The servants, who loved their open-hearted young master, lamented his departure; Margaret and Joseph mourned the loss of their brother, whilst silent tears bedewed the pale cheeks of Madame de la Colombière. The bonds which unite the members of a Christian household are so close, they have so many common interests and sympathies, that the inevitable hour of parting is to them necessarily a very bitter one. When therefore Claude, all the preparations for his journey complete, entered the *salon* to take his farewell, the

[1] The Jesuit Fathers at that time possessed two houses for novices, that of Avignon, which had existed since 1571, and another at Lyons, founded in 1606. There may have been some wisdom in sending the young man to a greater distance from his family.

room was filled with tears and lamentations. Margaret and Joseph held each a hand, whilst their mother pressed him to her heart. Humbert felt the separation keenly, and Claude himself was much overcome. No sound but of weeping was heard. Tears of human tenderness and regret! Heaven forbids them not to flow: they bear witness to a sorrow which is honest and pure, without shame and without remorse, the very life-blood of the heart's sacrifice to God! For, as a saintly theologian has well expressed it, the Christian is possessed not only of soul and body, but also of grace, that vivifying power, the parent of self-sacrifice and the healer of the troubled spirit. M. de la Colombière nerved himself to put an end to that distressing scene, and mounting on horseback with his son, tore him from the beloved valley, to which Claude felt he was saying an eternal adieu. Little by little the change of scene and the incidents of travel began to dissipate somewhat of the young man's grief, and talking fondly of the loved ones they had left behind, the father and son approached the termination of their journey. Whilst our travellers are entering the city of the Popes we may cast a backward glance on the mother whom they have left in prayers and tears. Completely resigned as she was to the will of God, and even happy in the thought of her son's vocation, Madame de la Colombière, with her warm and loving nature, could not but feel the separation from him bitterly. The Superior of the Novices, to whom Claude was presented by his father, received him with much cordiality. His arrival had been favourably anticipated, and that

very evening he entered the Novitiate.[1] M. de la Colombière, amongst other recommendations which he gave his son at the moment of parting, begged him never to forget the honour of the name he bore. "Father," replied Claude, "I will not forget, and since sanctity is the glory of the religious life, I promise to be a saint." No mere lip promise, as we shall hereafter perceive.

The young novice was warmly welcomed by the Jesuits. The fame of his talents and collegiate success, his piety, his amiability, and the readiness with which he had sacrificed the prospect of a brilliant worldly career, enlisted on his behalf the sympathies of all. Many were the hopes and prayers for his future usefulness in the cause of God and of the Church which accompanied his entrance into the religious life. Claude had just completed his eighteenth year when, on October 22nd, 1659, he joined the Society of Jesus. The two years of his novitiate were full of work and of promise, for during this period he laid the foundation of that pre-eminent piety for which he was afterwards celebrated. There is an axiom universally admitted in the code of Christian asceticism, "As novice, so monk." The time of probation which the Novitiate prescribes should be indeed the starting-point in the upward course. A fervent novice generally makes a good Religious, and the words of the inspired writer, "the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day," find their fullest realization in the life of those who serve God in the cloister, and such

[1] The Novitiate of St. Louis afterwards became part of the Hotel des Invalides, and is now an hospital for the aged.

had they in that of Claude de la Colombière. The early days of his novitiate were penetrated by Divine sweetness. His Heavenly Father marked the acceptance of the sacrifice by shedding an ineffable peace over the young heart so lately torn by parting from those dear to it, and the consciousness that he had accepted and was following the leading of a Divine Hand filled the soul of Claude with rejoicing.

We have but meagre details of the next few years of his life. They were not, we know, without trials and bitter struggles. He himself confessed in after-days that at this time he found much that was distasteful to him in the life on which he had entered. But the strength of his vocation triumphed over what he called his *étranges répugnances*, and as time went on his ripened judgment and force of character bore him victorious through all his inward conflicts to attain that self-abnegation which is so essential in the life of perfection. Henceforward his progress in virtue was as rapid as it had hitherto been in letters. The Lord had chosen him for His vineyard, and that grace which always brings its work to fruition was labouring for his sanctification. It was about this time that a little incident in the life of Claude de la Colombière occurred which unbroken tradition has handed down, and a recent notice has given to the public. Louis XIV., whose marriage with the Infanta Maria Teresa was then in contemplation, took occasion of the disturbances at Marseilles to visit Provence, proposing thence to pursue his journey to the Spanish frontier.

The King on leaving Aix passed through

Avignon, arriving in that town on March 18, 1660. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus had always been held in high esteem by the Queen-mother, Anne of Austria, and that great and pious Princess, willing to mark her regard for them on this occasion, visited the College of Avignon, accompanied by her son. "On Easter Monday, the 29th of March, their Majesties assisted at Mass in the Novitiate of St. Louis, and the King, wishing to give a regal remembrance of his visit to a church dedicated to his royal ancestor, suspended a diadem of pure gold above the tabernacle." Before leaving, Louis commanded that the novices should be presented to him. Amongst them was one with whose noble mien and modest bearing he was particularly struck. This was Claude de la Colombière, a cadet of an ancient family of Dauphiny. That the King should have distinguished young Colombière is all the more probable, because his Majesty may have remembered him as the successful competitor in the literary tournament at Lyons two years previously. Claude was about to commence the second year of his novitiate when he was suddenly and imperatively recalled to St. Symphorien. His mother, who, though still in the prime of life, had exhausted her strength in bringing up her numerous family, was at the point of death, and earnestly desired yet once again to see her beloved son.

Claude started instantly on receiving the summons, and arrived clothed in his Jesuit dress, to console her last moments. The devout novice was with her to the end, his tact and piety suggesting the words and aspirations best calcu-

lated to fortify the departing soul. His mother, greatly struck by the holy fervour of his demeanour, exclaimed, "My son, you will be a great saint."

He received her latest breath, and deeply treasured the dying words of one who had planted the earliest seeds of piety in his heart. They were to him a fresh incentive to press forward in the path of holiness, for to the end of his life he cherished his mother's beloved memory with filial piety. Madame de la Colombière was indeed worthy of the regret she inspired. Attached to the register of her death, drawn up by Maitre Besson, Curé of St. Symphorien, we find this simple but significant memorial: *Décédée en très-bonne Catholique.* It seemed as if her old pastor and friend had not been able to refrain from thus recording his sorrow at the loss, and respect for the memory of the chief ornament of his flock, the benefactress of his church and poor, the model of all that was most pious and Christian.

The novice, her devoted son, hastened by his prayers to speed the entrance of her soul into the regions of eternal bliss. Henceforth everything about him bespoke his desire to be worthy of his sublime vocation, and to say unto the Lord in the words of the Psalmist, "*I am Thy servant: give me understanding that I may know Thy testimonies*"—*ego servus tuus, da mihi intellectum.*[1]

God had deigned to show him wherein the excellence of a true Religious consisted. For it is not to all who enter the cloister that it is given to realize the full obligation of their vocation.

[1] Psalm cxviii. 125.

A certain thoughtlessness, so common to youth, or a want of depth of character, often make their steps heedless in a path beset with innumerable difficulties, of which heedlessness the least pernicious result to be feared is a serious loss of time.

Later in life Father de la Colombière made this excellent observation, "Sacrifice is a necessary ingredient of monastic life, but until the immolation has become a personal one, and self the victim, the real essence of monastic life has not been imbibed." In his own novitiate he endeavoured practically to grasp this truth, and in so doing laid the foundation of his future holiness.

About this time he began to realize more clearly than he had hitherto done what was his own predominant weakness, that is, the love of human praise and human glory. As before his conversion Francis Xavier sought the applause of his contemporaries as a teacher of science, so Claude de la Colombière had thought to make himself a name in the world of letters. It is true that he had long suspected the nothingness of earthly glory, but now that his perceptions were quickened by the light of faith, he determined to root the love of earth from his heart, and to wage a war without mercy and without truce against the miserable passion of human vanity. We all know something of the customs and usages of religious houses and novitiates, of their public and private penances, their corporal macerations and austerities, their acts of humility and charity. None exceeded Claude de la Colombière in the ardour with which he embraced these means, whose efficacy experience has approved for subduing the natural man.

This discipline bore fruit in the rapid strides he made towards perfection, and as the term of his novitiate drew to its close it was evident he was indeed a true Religious, the solidity of whose faith gave a promise of holiness rarely attained on earth.

To the rest of the community he was a model of obedience, poverty, chastity, gentleness, and humility, of an ardent faith which made the other world always present to his mind, and of a courage in the spiritual warfare whereby he exhibited the firmness of one who has nailed his colours to the mast, uniting the generous ardour of youth to manly virtue and mature experience. We shall see, as this history develops itself, that far from falling short of this his early promise, Claude de la Colombière only advanced to higher degrees of holiness, and seemed to live as life went on nearer and nearer to God. He was as one in haste to reach the higher ground of Christian perfection, as one who already knew how comparatively short would be his earthly career. Happy novice days, springtide of the religious life, too quickly sped away! to them the heart always looks fondly back, they are never forgotten. Father de la Colombière still retained at the close of life a loving memory of those early days, for in one of his last letters to a friend living at Avignon, he says that were it not that God had placed him at Lyons he should indeed envy his correspondent's residence at Avignon.

CHAPTER III.

Studies and Professorship.

1562—1671.

THE young Religious quitted the Novitiate full of holy zeal, his heart fired with Divine love, and ardently longing to promote the glory of God and the welfare of souls. Deeply imbued with that fundamental principle of the Jesuit rule that each member of the Company should avail himself of the resources of science and art, that is to say, of the powers of knowledge as instruments for the conversion of souls, the maintenance of religion, and defence of the Church, Claude now applied himself with redoubled energy to those deeper studies which should promote his efficiency as a labourer in the vineyard of his Lord. Once more he became an inmate of the College of the Holy Trinity, where he had formerly gained so much distinction, and for three years attended its lectures in the highest branches of literature and art. Amongst those who filled its chairs at that period were the celebrated Fathers Milliet de Challes[1] and Honoré Fabri. The professor of philosophy

[1] Father Milliet de Challes published a complete course of mathematics, in three volumes, and Father H. Fabri one on physical science, in six volumes, besides other works. He discovered the circulation of the blood before its announcement by Harvey (see the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*). He was in correspondence with all the savants of Europe. Father de la Chaise had just published his philosophical course.

was Father Francis de la Chaise, afterwards confessor to Louis XIV. This is not the occasion to discuss the course of instruction pursued by the distinguished Jesuit, suffice it to say that the subject of this memoir was one of his most promising disciples. The aptitude with which Claude de la Colombière applied himself to many and very diverse branches of learning excited the wonder and admiration of his colleagues. All subjects seemed within his range, and to be severally treated by him in a masterly and original manner. In composition he expressed himself with the clearness which an intimate knowledge of his subject alone could give, and with the purity of diction only to be acquired by a cultivated taste. The most delicate points of controversy were handled by him with marvellous dexterity, and facts which had hitherto been obscure became luminous in the light of his genius. In philosophy his quick and penetrating intelligence loved to fathom the inner depths of his theme, and whilst a certain subtlety was not wanting to his style, the clearness, precision, and solidity of his arguments never failed to gain the suffrages of his audience. He composed his dissertations according to the strictest rules of logic, but knew how to throw the charms of eloquence around the dryness of the schools. It would be hard to say whether he distinguished himself most in physical or mathematical sciences. His natural bias was, however, for subjects less abstruse and less material. Religion, with oratory as its advocate, was what really charmed and captivated him.

So distinguished a scholar as young de la Colom-

bière could not be allowed to remain a mere teacher of grammar in the College of a country town. He was destined for a larger sphere, and having finished the complementary studies which concluded his scientific and literary education, was installed in the rhetorical chair of the University of Lyons, and thus added another to the list of illustrious names for which that foundation is celebrated. The lives of the professors in the Colleges of the Society of Jesus are most laborious. Besides the religious exercises prescribed by their Rule, they have the preparation of lectures, the revision of pupils' work, and five hours of class, often supplemented by the surveillance of the young community during recreation, and other calls upon their time inevitable to the conduct of large educational houses. Such is the constant routine of many highly gifted men during the very prime of their days. Youth, however, throws its golden gladness over the incidents of college life, and joyous laughter may be called a special privilege of the young professors and prefects, for at their elastic age little makes the heart merry, care sits lightly, and joy comes at command. Time flies with wonderful rapidity amidst the occupations of this little kingdom, at once so loving and so rebellious, restless as the waves of the sea, and demanding the constant watchfulness of its guardians. The scholastic year quickly runs its round, the monotony of class and lecture-room being broken by the recurrence of Church festivals, holidays, and vacations. The work of the tutors is arduous, but eminently interesting. They have large opportunities for increasing their own stores

of knowledge, and, as nothing makes men so intimate with a subject as imparting it to others, they become thorough masters of the matters they profess. Besides this, they gain experience in dealing with other minds, and in the direction of youth. The higher the class, the larger the field it offers to the powers of the professor; hence the value attached to the chair of rhetoric, that science so essential to the practice of eloquence. The heads of the University did wisely in nominating young de la Colombière to this post. His modesty took alarm at the first intimation of his appointment to so important a position, but coming to him as it did with authority, he could not but ultimately accept it, and probably no one save himself entertained for a moment any fear of his success. We know enough of his character to be very sure he spared no endeavours to show himself worthy of the trust confided to him. Scarcely, indeed, surrounded by a numerous following of pupils, chiefly non-residents of the University, had he delivered his opening address than his reputation was made, his fame established.

The literary exercises and Latin harangue which, according to the time-honoured custom, he gave at the opening of the academical session, were received with enthusiasm, and it was soon apparent that the professor of rhetoric was one of the most distinguished men the University at that moment contained. Three times at the beginning of the scholastic year Claude de la Colombière found himself called upon to appear in the character of public orator. His discourses on these occasions were collected after his death, and published under

the title of *Prolusiones Oratoriæ*.[1] They consist of *Augusti Cæsaris ætas*, or "The Golden Age of Letters," *Laus oratoris Galli*—"A Eulogy on French Oratory," and *Laus panegyristæ*, in which the author extols the usefulness of the panegyrists, who in transmitting the history of noble deeds to posterity immortalized the memory of great men. These harangues, delivered in the purest Ciceronian Latin, seem to us to have as their only defect an over-finish of style. We feel too sensibly in reading them the laborious care with which the author has weighed each phrase and turn and word to secure the archaic purity of the whole. Indeed, in his ardour to preserve every characteristic feature of the classical period we find him introducing such an expression as *Dii immortales!* into his discourses. But whatever we may think of the taste of an age in which such servile imitation of the antique was in vogue, we cannot deny that these orations are both powerful and elegant, and fraught with the spirit of the times on which they are modelled. Nor was Claude de la Colombière less remarkable for his judgment and delicacy in the employment of his native language. Never in speech or in writing did he permit himself the use of an ill-turned or incomplete expression. That few Frenchmen have better understood the genius of their own language was the opinion of the most highly cultivated amongst his contemporaries, particularly of the celebrated Patru, who greatly applauded the observations of Père de la Colombière on the elegancies and refinements of

[1] This work is now very rare; the copy in the Library of Lyons bears the approval of four theologians, and the permission of the Father Provincial, Georges Collien, dated March 15, 1683.

the French tongue. For many years a correspondence of much interest was carried on between the two men, from the perusal of which we may gather the high esteem in which Claude de la Colombière was held by his distinguished and judicious friend. The contemporary writer to whom we owe the preservation of these letters has omitted to tell us under what circumstances the celebrated lawyer Patru, member of the Académie Française and the Professor of Rhetoric of the College of the Holy Trinity, became acquainted. To ascertain this point we have consulted the history of the times.

France was at that moment passing through a period of literary regeneration; their own native tongue was exciting the interest, and winning the affections of her studious and cultivated sons, to whose love and labours at this time is due the beautiful language which captivated the whole world in the French writers of the seventeenth century.

L'Astrée, the famous work of Honoré Urfé, inaugurated this era of reform. The Hotel de Rambouillet adopted it as a model, and the best writers of the period, whilst anxiously avoiding its mannerisms and affectations, owed much to the fidelity with which they copied its purity and grace of diction. Amongst its most careful imitators was Olivier Patru, surnamed the Quintilian of France. He devoted himself to the study of rhetoric, and was an accomplished judge in all matters of literary taste. Boileau and Racine submitted their productions to his severe yet judicious and valued criticism. A correct, but unimpassioned writer, Patru was one of those fathers of the

French language, from whom our great prose writers gained the refinement, the learning, and precision which distinguished their style. His first introduction to Père de la Colombière dates, as far as I have been able to ascertain, from the appearance of the translations of Cïcero's Discourse, *Pro Archia poeta*, and St. Chrysostom's Homily on prayer, bearing his name. These having attracted the attention of Claude de la Colombière, he made honourable and public mention of them, congratulating the author on his success. Patru, not only a learned but also a Christian man, gratified at this mark of the Jesuit's esteem, presented his acknowledgments of the compliment in courteous terms, and, impressed with the cultivation and acumen of the learned Father, desired his friendship. We may gather the affectionate terms which existed between them, in the following sentences which conclude a letter on public speaking, given in the second volume of Patru's works: "When I took up my pen I had no intention of inditing you so long an epistle, or of entering so fully into this subject. Pray remember that I have written the above without premeditation, it is therefore probably open to much correction. Adieu, Reverend Father, accept the warmest expressions of my affectionate regard."

L'Abbé Trublet,[1] a member of the Académie Française, confirms the high literary reputation

[1] L'Abbé Trublet, born in 1697, died 1770. L'Abbé Trublet, a judicious and solid writer, composed *Essais de littérature et de morale*, written with clearness and precision; *Les Panégyriques*, composed for the festivals of some saints, and preceded by some excellent remarks on pulpit oratory. Having applied to Voltaire's *Henriade*, Boileau's line, *Et je ne sais pourquoi je bâille en la lisant*, he incurred the hatred of that author, who turned him into ridicule in *Le pauvre Diable*.

which we have assigned to Père de la Colombière. "The celebrated Patru," says he, "spoke of him as one of those who in that age were most deeply versed in the literature of their country." Three years passed peacefully by in the exercise of professorial duties; not for a moment, however, did Claude de la Colombière forget that, though a teacher of letters and rhetoric, the chief aim of all his labours was to captivate the hearts of his pupils to the love of God. This is indeed the one and only object of the Society of Jesus in devoting itself to the education of youth.

In all its teachings it endeavours to instil the germs of Divine truth, that later may be produced the fruits of sanctification and salvation. It was this hope which induced the young priest to accept the toils and responsibilities of a professorial chair, a laborious post, but one in which he felt he could do some real good. Such a belief sufficed to make any occupation acceptable to him. A short absence from Lyons in 1666 broke the uniformity of a life devoted to the schools. A notice that on the 5th of May in that year Père de la Colombière preached on the occasion of the canonization of St. Francis de Sales in the Church of the Visitation at Avignon has been preserved to us.[1] It was natural that having composed that eulogium as Professor of Rhetoric at Lyons, he should be selected to deliver it on that day. Claude de la Colombière made no secret of his desire to dedicate himself more exclusively than he had hitherto done to the functions of his sacred calling. When, therefore, permission for him to commence the

[1] He took for his text Samson's riddle, *De forti egressus est dulcedo.* (*Les Jesuites à Avignon.* Par A. Canron.)

study of theology arrived, it was hailed by him with exceeding joy. To be a priest, to be privileged to offer daily the Holy and adorable Sacrifice, to be united to God in a closer and more intimate union: such a dream of happiness he had long cherished, and now seemed about to realize.

He left all the literary pursuits in which his intellect had so greatly delighted, he abandoned the chair which he had filled with so much applause, and became one amongst a number of young priests who with him desired to follow the course of lectures on sacred subjects given that session in the College of the Holy Trinity. With whatever ardour Claude devoted himself during the next four years, from 1667 to 1671, to the studies his profession entailed, we may be very sure that his highest endeavours were given to the deepening of the religious life in his own soul.

With fewer occasions of distraction, the glory of God in the salvation of men, as the proposed end of his labours, was now placed more conspicuously before him. It seemed as if the happy novice-days, in which he had no thought but of God and no desire but to please Him in the paths of virtue, had returned. Studies carried on in a recollected and devotional spirit, far from hardening the heart or depriving it of Divine influences, only fortify its powers, and by discovering to it the infinite mercies of God, and the far-stretching sympathies of Christian charity, enlarge its horizons.

It was in this attitude of mind that Claude de la Colombière, under the guidance of a prudent and holy director, pursued his theological course. Exact in his observance of the Rule, unswervingly

faithful in the practice of his religious duties, his life was a beneficial example to all around, whilst to himself that period was a time of sensible progress and improvement. As, in fine, religion strengthens us in every good work, the regularity of his life, his fervent piety, and the singleness of his aim, all conspired to secure for his studies a brilliant success, and he became known as an accomplished theologian. Some years later, a young student writing to him for counsel when about to enter on a similar course of reading, Père de la Colombière, after apologizing for consenting to comply with his request, continued: "For myself, had I the opportunity of going through my theological studies again, I would, I can assure you, give to meditation double the time I devoted to reading. It is by meditation only one can gain any insight into things spiritual, or form any stable opinion upon matters controversial." In so writing he doubtless spoke of his own experience. It is indeed solely by the aid of reflection that the decisions of dogma can be assimilated, or doctrine thoroughly grasped. Such, at least, is this process in men gifted with large capacity and intellectual power. The climax of his university career did not consist for Claude de la Colombière, in the public announcement of its termination, or in the exhibition of his theses, theological and philosophical; but in his consecration to the priesthood. From henceforth and for eternity he found himself in the presence of God, as His minister, a dispenser of spiritual gifts, a channel of mercy to others. What an incentive to renewed spiritual watchfulness, to feel that he was about to hold within his hands the Saint of saints, the Holy of Holies!

CHAPTER IV.

First experience as a Preacher.

1671—1673.

FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE'S oratorical powers which greatly developed themselves during the period of his theological studies, had been recognized ever since the day, when yet a timid novice, he delivered a short but thrilling discourse in honour of the Blessed Virgin. Since then his gift of speaking making itself felt in his addresses on each recurring festival of the College, his Superiors were convinced of his future success as a preacher, and determined to dedicate him to the ministry of the pulpit. No decision on their part could have given greater satisfaction to its subject, for it opened to him at once a sphere of labour and an occasion for devoting himself to the salvation of souls. The delivery of the Dominical or Sunday sermon in the College chapel was entrusted to him, and from henceforth his time was entirely occupied with the preparation of his discourses and the study of the Fathers of the Church.

It was no light task which was thus laid on him; but he loved work and above all the work of an evangelist. Souls were at length given him for whom to labour; a place had been assigned him in the vineyard of his Lord; it was a happiness to be

able to dedicate himself henceforth without reserve to his holy calling. Père de la Colombière now commenced a series of sermons in the College of the Holy Trinity, most of which have been preserved to us. Every Sunday, every festival, the chapel was filled to overflowing, not only by resident and non-resident pupils, but also by many unconnected with the church, attracted thither by the beauty of the services and the talents of the preacher. Full of natural eloquence, feeling that he must not disappoint those who in nominating him to this post had shown such confidence in his powers, Père de la Colombière threw all the strength of his soul into his discourses, and imbued the hearts of his hearers with some portion of the glowing ardour of his own faith. He justified and surpassed all the hopes which had been entertained of his success. His audiences, composed of the most cultivated minds in Lyons, appreciated the elegant diction, the solid learning, and the manner, at once dignified and impassioned, of the preacher. The charms of his voice attracted their attention, which was riveted by the solidity of his reasoning. We gather from the perusal of this course of sermons not only what was at that time the style of Père de la Colombière's preaching, but also the occasions on which many of these discourses were delivered. On the feast of St. Bonaventure he pronounced a panegyric on that great and holy Doctor in the church dedicated to his honour. This oration, carefully prepared and excellently delivered, interested and captivated his audience. The preacher illustrated his subject with many appropriate quotations, amongst others the follow-

ing, which gives St. Francis de Sales' reason for preferring St. Bonaventure to St. Thomas Aquinas: "I would rather be a Seraph than an Angel; I would rather love much than know much." On the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (the great Carmelite festival) he preached in the church of the Order, picturesquely situated on one of the northern slopes of Mount Fourvier, overlooking the Saône. In speaking of the holy scapular he thus apostrophizes the city of Lyons and testifies to the devotion of the Lyonnese for the Immaculate Mother.

O Lyons, more blessed in the possession of this celestial treasure, than in the wealth of merchandise your walls contain, do you ever sufficiently recognize the generous love which has associated you in all the privileges and prerogatives succeeding Pontiffs have bestowed on the Order of Mount Carmel? . . .

Since the day when the holy brotherhood deposited its scapular in your midst, how many calamities, public and private, have your citizens escaped! What immunity from sickness it has secured you! But for the protection of Mary, how many listening to me at this hour might have fallen victims to the sword, to disease, to perils of water, to perils of fire! How many to her powerful intercession owe more than life, even the salvation of their souls!

It was about this time that Père de la Colombière preached for the clothing of Mlle. Claire de X——. The ceremony took place in the chapel of the Poor Clares,[1] and the Rev. Father did not fail to remark the coincidence that this young lady commenced

[1] Belonging to the old convent near the Bridge d'Ainay.

her religious life on the anniversary of her own birth and on the festival of the saintly Abbess whose rule she was about to profess.

If, in connection with this discourse, the reader will turn to the sermons delivered by Père de la Colombière at another convent on a similar occasion, he will be struck with the height on which the Father places the standard of perfection attainable in the religious life. And as Père de la Colombière was not one of those who preach what they do not practise, we may well believe that what he exhorted others to attempt was truly the aim of his own life. His biography, indeed, bears ample testimony to the strength of will and energy of purpose with which he cultivated the Christian perfection he preached with such enthusiasm. In perusing his life we feel ourselves in the company of one separated from the world, dead to the things of time and whose life was hid with Christ in God. Later on we propose to criticize his sermons in detail. Suffice it to say for the present that his earlier discourses, which he never had the opportunity of revising, appear to us to be too declamatory in style: a superabundance of rhetoric impedes the flow of eloquence. Père de la Colombière had not yet attained the refined simplicity which distinguishes his later compositions. As the earliest efforts, however, of one who had never had the advantage of hearing the great preachers of his day, they are full of promise of future excellence. We shall see how this promise was fulfilled, and how by incessant labour and the study of the best models, Father de la Colombière became one of the first speakers of his time. But whilst giving

himself wholly to his calling, a domestic interest of much moment demanded many of his thoughts at this time, namely, the vocation of his sister Margaret, seven years younger than himself, to the religious life. But properly to introduce this subject we must give some details as to the Colombière family at that date. Since the death of Madame de la Colombière the family mansion at St. Symphorien had often remained untenanted. The eldest son, Humbert, who had taken a doctor's degree in law, practised in the courts of Vienne, and, marrying Mlle. Madeleine Pâquet, daughter of an advocate in that town, settled in the neighbourhood of his wife's family. Joseph was absent finishing his education, and M. Bertrand de la Colombière, finding himself alone at St. Symphorien, had taken up his abode with his eldest son at Vienne, where, having been appointed in 1630 King's Councillor for the district, his official duties made it convenient for him to reside.[1] His daughter Margaret, who from infancy had always loved retirement and solitude, was anxious to follow the example of her brother Claude in embracing the religious life. For many years she had looked forward to some day becoming a Carmelite nun. But it eventually proved that such was not the sphere to which God had destined her. Nor till later did this chaste dove discover that cleft in the rock which was to be her refuge. Her natural bent towards the religious life was very marked,

[1] The house of St. Symphorien was, indeed, their country residence, where the family always lived during part of the summer. The parish register records the birth of Marie Magdalene, daughter of Humbert de la Colombière.

and her brother encouraged her hopes. She had already received the necessary permission to enter the Order of Mount Carmel, and was only awaiting a favourable opportunity quietly to leave the paternal roof, when her father, learning her intention, declared that nothing should ever induce him to give his consent to her proposal, and perceiving that she meditated secretly withdrawing herself, he caused her movements to be watched.

CHAPTER V.

Vocations in the Family.

1670—1673.

MARGARET saw it was useless to try and evade her father's solicitude. As a last hope she proposed entering the Convent of the Visitation of Bellecours at Lyons, trusting that by choosing another Order than the Carmelites she might disarm his opposition.

Her pious father was so struck with this proof of her fixity of purpose that he no longer dared to gainsay what was apparently a Divine inspiration, and putting aside his own grief at the prospect of losing his daughter, gave her leave to follow the bidding of her Lord.

Margaret quickly availed herself of this happy change in her father's disposition, and took up her abode in the Convent of Bellecours. Her Jesuit brother gave her much valuable counsel during her retreat, urging her to lay very deeply the foundations of the Christian perfection to which she aspired. Mlle. de la Colombière was now in her twenty-fourth year, and the change from the luxury of her father's house, where her every wish had been law, to so austere a convent as the Visitation at Lyons, must have been a hard trial to nature, with its love of ease and independence. Grace, however, enabled her to meet with humble courage

the privations of the life before her. But a most unexpected trial awaited her in these early days of fervour. Her ather's grief in parting with her had been too much for a frame already weakened by age and suffering. His end seemed to be approaching, and the young postulant felt that she had no choice but to return home and devote herself to the claims of filial piety.

Père de la Colombière was amongst those who most strongly urged on his sister the necessity of making this sacrifice, comforting her with the assurance that her leaving the convent for a time should be no obstacle to her return on some future day, when duty no longer called her elsewhere.

M. de la Colombière was so revived by the re-appearance of his daughter that the alarming symptoms of his malady shortly disappeared, and he gradually regained his former state of health. During the crisis of his illness he had made Margaret promise never to leave him again, but always fearing he might yet lose his beloved child, he himself proposed on his recovery that if she still desired to enter a convent she should as a compromise choose that of the Visitation at Condrien, where he might yet see her constantly. The old man remembered how Claude de Villars and his wife, the originators of that foundation, had for many years before their death lived in its immediate neighbourhood to be near their two daughters professed in that convent. Margaret was well content to accept this arrangement, and as soon as her father's health was fairly re-established withdrew into the Convent of the Visitation at Condrien, near Vienne, where, as its annals express it in alluding to the armorial bearings

of the Colombières, "the dove at length reached the ark," and where indeed Margaret found the retreat chosen for her by God.

Her brother Claude wrote to her immediately, urging her to embrace the life on which she had again entered with all the energies of her heart and mind. But we will give his own words. Having thanked God for the grace vouchsafed his sister, and rejoiced with her on the peace of mind she had already attained, he continues—

> The more completely you are able, detaching yourself from the things of earth, to fix your heart on those above, the more rapidly will the peace that is in you grow and increase. Most earnestly do I beg you to make our Lord the object of all your joy and hope, fearing lest any part of your present content should spring from your natural love of quiet and dislike of the world; for your peace of mind would be indeed a false one had it such a source; remember, it is a cross which you wish to embrace, and the life best calculated to raise you to its height is a life of obedience and self-denial.

His fraternal affection for his correspondent leads him to enter into details, and to treat of many important subjects. His letter is, indeed, a complete dissertation, at whose length he himself smiles, saying, "You will think I have written you a long sermon, but I entreat you to lay what I have said to heart, and not as one is so apt to do with advice of this kind, to read and forget it. I can truly assure you that all I have written has been dictated by my very ardent desire for your growth in holiness."

Such, indeed, was his anxiety for his sister's improvement, the Margaret whom he so loved,

whom he had held upon his knee, and by whom his affection was so warmly returned, that he threatens neither to see nor write to her if her aspirations only reach "to being *moderately* good."

We recognize, in the earnestness with which he entreats her to labour zealously for the sanctification of her soul, his longing to infuse into her his own remarkable whole-heartedness in every undertaking. On the occasion of her clothing, her brother delivered a most eloquent address, extolling the high estate of such as are dedicated to God in the religious life.[1] He rejoiced to see his sister affiliated to an Order which he knew and esteemed, and for which as years went by and he became acquainted with many of its members, particularly with the Blessed Margaret Mary, his regard and affection increased. Nor were the nuns of Condrien long in recognizing the piety of Père de la Colombière; they thought themselves happy in receiving him in their convent, and in listening to his sermons and conferences, "so full," as they said, "of zeal and holy unction that it was impossible not to be benefited by them."[2]

It would doubtless have been a great joy to Sister Margaret Elisabeth that the discourse at her profes-

[1] August 4th, 1674. Born on the 28th of October, 1648, she had nearly completed her twenty-sixth year.

[2] In a manuscript of the seventeenth century preserved in the convent, and which has been kindly lent us, we read these words: "Among other pious women whom we received during these six years, we had the privilege of giving the holy habit to the only sister of Father de la Colombière, whose piety is so well known that, recognizing also the amiable qualities of that dear Sister, we cannot but look upon her coming amongst us as a source of thanksgiving. To it we owe the visits of that great servant of God, whose exhortations and stirring discourses," &c. (*History of the Convent of the Visitation of St. Mary at Condrien*, 1630 to 1697.)

sion in the year 1675 should have been pronounced by her brother. We know not whether this consolation was granted her, but some time after he writes to her as follows: "I little thought when I wished you good-bye how long it would be before I should be with you again, and indeed I see no immediate prospect of our meeting. We shall do so when the Lord wills. I shall hope by that time to find you have made much progress in holiness, and that you will be able to tell me somewhat of those things which experience and meditation have taught you since your profession."

He continues, giving her much profitable advice, and exhorting her to live in a great detachment from the world and in a close union with God. We would recommend this letter and the two which precede it to the perusal of all who contemplate entering the religious life. Detached as Père de la Colombière was from all earthly ties, we see in his correspondence how deep was the spiritual interest he maintained for all the members of his family. We have said enough to show our readers his anxious care for his sister's spiritual progress. As long as he lived he gave her his counsels and his prayers, and we cannot pass a higher eulogium on Margaret de la Colombière than to say that she was worthy of her brother. Humbert and Joseph, Claude's brothers, followed perseveringly the profession they had adopted. The former, a Judge in the Criminal Court of Vienne, exchanged his post for that of Master of Inland Revenues at Grenoble. He was a frequent visitor at Condrien, attracted thither as much by a religious as by a fraternal feeling. A contemporary speaks of him as of one who lived in

the world the life of the cloister. The second brother, Joseph, entered the priesthood, and after a retreat which he made at the suggestion of his brother Claude, according to the system of St. Ignatius, felt himself so full of missionary zeal that he crossed the ocean to preach the Gospel in Canada. Truly there was a strain of noble self-sacrifice in this old blood of the Colombières. The needs of his mission recalled him to France in the year 1691, when he officiated at the marriage of his nephew, and fifteen years later we find his name attached to an official paper, in which he is designated as "Messire Joseph de la Colombière, priest, Vicar-General of the diocese of Quebec, Archdeacon and member of the Supreme Council of that city."

We have thus far traced the lives of the brothers and the sister of Père de la Colombière; they were holy people, faithful to the traditions of their family. It will be pleasant to meet again in the course of our narrative the pious Margaret Elisabeth and the not less interesting figure of Humbert de la Colombière.

CHAPTER VI.

Tertianship.

1673—1674.

It was not only with joy but with alacrity that Claude de la Colombière, the young and brilliant rhetorician, the talented and rising orator, obeyed the summons which called him away from the University of Lyons, where he was reaping so much applause. The third "year of probation," as it is called in the Society of Jesus, is indeed a second novitiate, being consecrated to the exercises of the interior life. It is there that the young theologian in a long course of instruction and study steeps his soul, so to speak, in that piety which is only to be acquired in a period of solitude and contemplation. Having become more capable of serious thought, he can reflect deeply on the responsibilities he is about to accept in taking the final vows. St. Ignatius has ordained that this conclusive test should commence with a retreat of thirty days, and it is easy to realize what a powerful lever for the sanctification of souls must these exercises be which are undertaken after such a preface. It is very difficult to escape the influence of grace. Under it a man learns to know himself, to form a juster idea of perfection, whilst the soul within him is stirred to its very depths. It is then that the student heart, filled with the love of God, frames

the plan of its future work in life, and makes those resolves which if carried out lead it to holiness. During the remainder of the year these projects ripen under the fertilizing influences of self-denial, and by the practice of this virtue become bound to God by the fibres of a tender and above all a generous love. The third year of probation is a sort of crucible, whence the soul comes forth purified, invigorated, and reflecting a Divine light. The Society of Jesus, as organized by St. Ignatius, is undoubtedly a work of genius, and provides for its members all the means for strengthening and renewing in themselves the energy and final perseverance essential to the supernatural life. It is in this school of holiness that we are going to watch the progress made by Claude de la Colombière, whose exceptionally beautiful nature was already so rich in Divine grace. This was the happy moment for which he had waited during the fifteen years he had already spent in the Society, the starting-point of a new life in which he hoped to detach himself more thoroughly from earthly ties. He brought to the undertaking the inestimable qualities of a perfect moral discipline, unlimited confidence in God, humble distrust of himself, and a generosity of purpose that had in it no reserve. With a vocation so decided and a heart so desirous of sanctification there could be little doubt of his extracting the greatest advantages from these spiritual exercises. In a short journal written by himself and called *The Spiritual Retreat of Father de la Colombière*, is to be found the fullest testimony to his piety. It is a collection of notes in which he gives in detail the encouragements and inspirations vouchsafed to him in times of prayer,

remarking upon all his thoughts and emotions with a closeness of analysis that is surprising. We think that the reader cannot fail to be charmed with the integrity, purity, and elevation of the heart which thus lays itself bare before him. The publication of this volume was decided on by the Jesuit Fathers after his death in consequence of the tone pervading the whole journal, which gives the clearest possible idea of the beauty of the author's soul, to say nothing of the consolations which must accrue to all from its perusal.

It does not enter into the plan of the present memoir to reproduce *The Spiritual Retreat of Father de la Colombière*, as it forms part of his printed works and may be read and meditated on elsewhere.

We will therefore content ourselves with a rapid sketch of its contents.[1] The Spiritual Exercises are, as we know, divided into four weekly parts, each having its own special object and forming in their entirety the gradations by which the soul is led to intimate union with Almighty God and a more complete abnegation of self. Father de la Colombière begins thus: "First week. I have commenced with my will so far braced by the grace of God as to be determined to follow all the teachings of the Holy Spirit; and having no cause to fear that through any earthly tie I may be keeping back from God any portion of my heart. I am firmly resolved to suffer for His sake all the moral desolation and dryness that may fall upon me, and which I shall

[1] The work is far too little known, as the inspirations, instructions, and maxims contained in its pages would be certain to fructify in the souls of all those bringing grace to its perusal. It is to be desired that it should be published separately and with explanatory notes, in order that it might be more widely circulated.

have only too well deserved through the poor use I have made of the consolations and illuminations hitherto received." In these few lines may be recognized the soul of one who has been in the habit of seeking his Creator in prayer, and for whose generous nature a life of self-denial has no terrors. He declares at the outset that he embarks in these exercises as though he were about to die at their conclusion, so that he may by a perfect sincerity conquer the pride which has such repugnance to laying itself bare. Ah, how illumined as to their inmost recesses do souls become through honest self-contemplation! How they learn to sound the depths of the human heart, gauging aright its pettiness and its weakness! It is with this marvellous sagacity manifesting itself through all the writings of Father Claude de la Colombière that the reader will be most struck as his life is unfolded. As a first act of self-denial on commencing his retreat he contented himself with the subjects and works of meditation which were suggested to him, believing that God would point out to him that which would be most suitable to his soul. The sacrifice was the more meritorious as he had quite a passion for certain books on the spiritual life which treated of it in a somewhat higher manner, as for example the writings of St. Teresa and *The Inner Life of a Christian.*[1]

It need hardly be said that his was not a nature insensible to the beauties of literary style; at the same time, what he desired above all was a truthful and high-toned religion, that is to say, one whose views of the spiritual life should be both deep and

[1] The author of this work is M. de Bernières.

logical. God blessed his offering, and numerous were the graces for which he had to thank the Almighty vouchsafed to him during his retreat.

In that part of the journal which refers to this week of the retreat, the avowals which he makes concerning himself in the fervour of his soul, reveal the innocence of his past life, his unswerving confidence in the Divine mercy, his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the chivalrous generosity of his whole nature. The first series of meditations terminates with one on the Holy Eucharist, which filled him with spiritual consolation. Speaking of this particular meditation he says: "From the first moment I felt myself penetrated by a sweet sense of admiration and gratitude for God's goodness to me in this mystery, arising probably from my having thereby received so much grace, and therein been so essentially conscious of the sustaining power of this the Angels' Daily Bread, that it had become impossible to me to think of It without a sense of infinite gratitude." Unfortunately, we are left in ignorance as to the special nature of the graces and gifts accorded to him by our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, for in the humility of a true servant of God he carried this secret to the grave.

In the second week he gives us his reflections on the different mysteries of our faith. On the subject of the Incarnation, as he contemplates the Angel at the feet of a Maiden, Mary taking the place of a handmaid, and the Son of God condescending for our sake to annihilation so complete, Father de la Colombière exclaims: "What a sight for me, O my God, do such examples as these afford of the very perfection of self-humiliation! It is indeed meet

to meditate on the feelings of beings so exalted, but above all to contemplate the complete renunciation of Himself by which Jesus Christ begins the glorification of God and the reparation of all the outrages His Divine Majesty has suffered through the pride of men. Where shall I place myself, when I see Jesus Christ Himself in nothingness? and how shall I sufficiently humble myself when the Son of God effaces Himself before the Father? Never until now have I understood the words of St. Bernard when he says: 'A worm of the earth inflates himself in the insolence of his pride, while the only Son of God humbles and annihilates Himself entirely.'"

It was during this second week of retreat that by the sustaining influences of an extraordinary grace Father Claude was enabled to carry out a project he had nourished for three or four years, of consecrating his soul more closely to God by a complete offering of himself. Let us listen to the outpourings of his heart.

How great are Thy mercies towards me, O God Almighty! For what am I that Thou shouldst deign to accept an offering so poor as that of my heart? It shall be indeed all Thy own wholly detached from worthless earthly ties. Be Thou then, O most loving Jesus, my Father, Friend, and Master, my All: since Thou dost deign to be satisfied with my heart, would it not indeed be unreasonable were it not satisfied with Thine? Henceforth I have no wish save to live for Thee, and should such be Thy good pleasure may my life be long, giving me more time in which to suffer for Thee. I ask not for death to abridge my sufferings, for as it is not

Thy will that I should die at the same age [1] as Thyself, then blessed be that will—but at least it is right I begin to live for Thee at the age when Thou didst die for mankind in general, and for me in particular.

What was this grave resolution and great sacrifice which was to be an epoch in his life, and raise it at one bound to a state of higher perfection? He was going to bind himself by a vow to observe faithfully all the rules of his Order *without one exception.*

Now among these rules there are, besides those which necessitate the continued endurance of the various trials entailed by a life of community, other stricter ones which consist in nothing less than, like St. Paul, the renouncing all for the foolishness of the Cross. This is an end attained indeed by few, but at which all should do their utmost to aim. At the same time, for Father de la Colombière, who had been studying and carrying out the rules of the Order for fifteen years, this effort to reach sanctification was insufficient, he wished once and for all to burst the bonds of self-love, and for this purpose imposed on himself the practice of even heroic virtues. This can best be realized by noting the following points to which he bound himself:

First. To desire insult, calumny, and injury, even to be considered a lunatic, so long as he should have given no just grounds for such imputations nor in any way offended God.

Secondly. Never to have any will other than that of God as touching adversity, prosperity, places, employments, life or death.

Thirdly. Always to seek as far as in him lay

[1] Father de la Colombière was at this time thirty-three years of age.

that which should be most opposed to his own wishes.

Fourthly. Never to be on the watch for that which flatters the senses or is a satisfaction to vanity.

Fifthly. Never to avoid any mortification that might present itself.

Sixthly. Never to share even those pleasures into the midst of which he should find himself so necessarily thrown, except when it must appear almost affected and singular to decline them.

The reader will easily gather from the above that such resolves as these might daunt the most determined. The high and holy thoughts which decided the saintly Father to undertake such a contract have been left by him in writing for the good of those to whom his motives might not be clear.

First. He desired to make it an indispensable necessity that he should fulfil as far as possible all the duties of his calling and to be faithful to God even in the smallest things.

Secondly. He wished once and for ever to snap all the fibres of his self-love, cutting off from it that hope of finding satisfaction in self, which seems to be ever alive in the heart of man, be his state of mortification what it may.

Thirdly. Seeing the uncertainty of life from day to day, he wished to lay up for himself all at once, as it were, the self-denials of a very long life, and also keep himself in that state wherein death, which snatches from us this means of glorifying God, is not to be feared. The Almighty will indeed take our self-denials in this life as a pledge that, were such His good pleasure, we would willingly thus glorify Him for eternity.

Fourthly. He wished through the necessity he now imposed upon himself of being self-disciplined in all things for as long as God should please to prolong his life, to make reparation for all the irregularities of the past, and this motive had more weight with him than all others.

Fifthly. To acknowledge in some degree God's infinite mercies to him in binding him to carry out His lightest wishes with scrupulous fidelity.

Sixthly. Though God in His goodness often spares men the penalty of that eternal damnation due to those who neglect His will, Father de la Colombière desired to do this will in all things from respect for it alone.

Seventhly. In order to give himself to the service of God without reserve of any kind, he wished to detach his heart from all human affections, so that he might devote all his powers to the service of God.

The reader will notice the practical character of these resolutions. They were the offspring of mystical theology, but they bore daily fruit in deeds of the highest virtue.

Besides which, after gravely weighing the subject, and bringing all the penetration of his mind to bear upon it, he came to the conclusion that that to which he was binding himself, though difficult indeed, was by no means impossible. "In inspiring St. Ignatius with our rules," said he, "God must have intended they should be carried out. There can, therefore, be no moral impossibility of doing this. On the contrary, the vow to observe the rules, instead of being a hindrance to so doing, must facilitate it; not only because it removes temptations, by inspiring a fresh fear of mortal sin, but because it binds

Almighty God to give greater help in the hour of need."

He then cited the example of Blessed John Berchmans,[1] who passed five years in the Society of Jesus without his conscience having once reproved him for the infraction of a single rule, and he added these words: "Why should I not, with the grace of God, do the same at an age when one should have greater strength, and at which one is less exposed to the praise and respect of men, the most dangerous enemies one has to combat?" He never feared that the stringency of the vow would rob his soul of its calm, and so become a stumbling-block to him. *Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam, et non est illis scandalum*, that is to say, "*There is great peace for those who love Thy law, O Lord, and they are not offended at it.*"[2]

This is an article of faith, and consequently the more we love this law the greater is our peace. The excessive care required to observe the very smallest details of that which is laid down, far from fettering the mind, gives it freedom; *Ambulabo in latitudine, quia mandata tua exquisivi*, that is to say, "*I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy commandments.*"[3]

Father de la Colombière, on examining himself in the presence of God, could not but feel that he had already for some time been living up to the standard which he should have to maintain after taking this vow; and his conception of the idea of doing so

[1] This angelic youth, the faithful imitator of St. Aloysius, was remarkable for an exact fidelity to all religious observances. He died at the age of twenty-two, and was beatified by His Holiness Pius IX., May 18, 1865.

[2] Psalm cxviii. 165. [3] Psalm cxviii. 45.

arose more from a desire to bind himself to persevere than from a wish to do anything new and extraordinary. It seemed to him that the mere thought of making such a vow would detach him from worldly things almost as strongly as though he felt the hand of death upon him, and he looked for support neither from his own resolves, nor from his own strength of will, but from the infinite goodness of God, and from the grace which He never fails to communicate to us in proportion to the generosity of our service. After all, he only needed to increase his watchfulness over himself, seeing that he was already anxious to carry out voluntarily these same rules of life to which he was about to bind himself.

Far from being alarmed at the thought of his vow, he delighted in it, for it seemed to him that he had at last found that treasure which has to be bought so dearly, and that he was about to enter a kingdom of peace and freedom, in which the love of self would hardly dare to tempt him, so imminent would be the danger of listening to its voice. It was no passing fervour which inclined him to take this vow. For long he had nourished the idea, reserving its final examination for his grand retreat, and the nearer the time drew for its execution the easier did it appear, and the greater did he find his strength and his resolution. He submitted his project, together with the motives from which it sprang, to his Superior in writing, begging him to examine into it, and announcing his determination not only to give it up entirely should it not meet with his approval, but to do so with the same submission to his opinion which he should accord to the word of God.

His director[1] was a man of great wisdom, of exemplary life, and of long experience in the spiritual warfare. Thoroughly convinced that with the assistance of grace, the fervent Religious would be able to reach the necessary degree of perfection, he allowed him to bind himself by vow to the practice of all that he had proposed to himself. Never in the sequel had Father de la Colombière any difficulty as to the observation of this contract, nor did he find his conduct in the least fettered by it. On the contrary, he rejoiced in the liberty of the children of life, and it seemed to him that he had wings to carry him to the pinnacle of perfection.

During the third week the sufferings of our Lord are the subjects for meditation ordained by the Exercises. What first strikes the mind of the Christian student is the firm and confident countenance with which Jesus goes to meet those who are looking for Him. He considers the Heart of Jesus going straight to God without hesitating for a moment at taking the step, although that Heart had but the instant before been plunged in bitterness, and suffering intense anguish; sinless, but expiating sin. He next admires the attitude of this same Heart towards Judas who betrayed Him, the Apostles who with cowardice forsook Him, the Princes, Priests, and Pharisees, who were the authors and accomplices of the persecution which He endured. Nothing had the power to arouse in Him the smallest sentiment of anger and hatred, nor

[1] It is believed that his director was Father Antony de Boissieu, born in 1623, at St. Germain-Laval en Forery, who died at Lyons in 1691. He published various works full of the deepest piety, *Meditations*, *A Retreat of Eight Days*, &c.

was His love for His disciples or for those who afflicted Him in any way diminished. In deep contemplation Father de la Colombière sought to know this Heart without gall and bitterness, and filled with an unutterable tenderness for His enemies, which no treachery or ill-treatment could change into hatred. For the second time he fixed his mind with all its power of thought on the study of the Divine Master's Sacred Heart. It seemed as though some mysterious attraction was leading him to the Sanctuary of infinite charity. He begged of the Blessed Virgin the grace which should make the dispositions of his heart to sympathize with those of the Heart of Jesus, for he seemed to see in the Heart of the Mother the reflected sentiments of the Son. "Although crushed by her sorrow, and in so terrible a strait, she wishes no evil to His executioners; on the contrary, she loves them, and offers for them the Blood of the Victim." Enraptured by this spectacle, and ardently excited by it to imitate this sublime virtue, he exclaims: "O Hearts of Jesus and Mary, truly worthy to absorb all hearts! you for the future shall be my models. I will endeavour in the various occasions of life to be in sympathy with your feelings. I desire that my heart may be in the Heart of Jesus, and in the heart of Mary, so that its every movement may be in harmony with these Sacred Hearts."

At every line we may note the effect produced by meditation on the sufferings of our Lord. The sight of those generous acts seems spontaneously to transplant the soul into an atmosphere more pellucid than its own or that of other created things.

In the bleeding and wounded Flesh of Jesus we see the love of humiliation and sufferings, together with all the precepts of self-renunciation, and it is difficult to imagine a heart with any real nobility resisting the eloquence of such an appeal as that of the picture of God crucified for love of His creatures. From what we know of the character of Father de la Colombière, his was a mind peculiarly capable of understanding this Divine lesson ; for its result was the offering to Jesus not of tears of compassion, but of a strong unswerving resolve to devote himself to all works, all sacrifices, and to die in suffering in order to follow the example of his sweet Saviour.

In the fourth week his heart is overflowing with feeling ; but faithful to the essentially practical asceticism of St. Ignatius' teaching, he makes use of the glorious mysteries to fortify his desire to conform himself to Jesus the Divine Model.

In meditating on the love of God, he owns that he should be the most ungrateful and unfortunate of men if he should fail to give himself utterly to God, or if he could ever consent to any portion being kept back. He comments with energy on the words of St. Ignatius, *Amorem tui solum cum gratia mihi dones, et hoc sufficit*—" Give me, O Lord, Thy love and Thy grace, and that shall alone suffice me." He prays for a love in which shall be more of stability than of either fervour or sweetness. He has but one desire, and that is to please God in every action of his life, and to arrive at this he is prepared to meet all trials, and ready to be faithful to the end through all temptations and dryness of heart.

On the festival of St. Francis Xavier, after having

written some beautiful thoughts on the virtues of the Apostle of India and Japan, he addresses himself to the Saint, and implores his intercession at the throne of grace in these words: "If your zeal for the eternal salvation of an unknown barbarian was such that you went to seek him at the ends of the earth, can you neglect that of one of your own fraternity?" He then adds what appears to be a revelation.

"All at once my mind was as it were illumined. I saw myself dragged in chains to prison, accused and condemned in that I had preached Christ crucified. . . . At the same time I seemed to conceive an intense longing for the salvation of those unfortunate men who are living in heresy, and felt that I would gladly give the last drop of my blood to save one soul from Hell."

A presentiment seems to come over him that God has sufferings in store for him, and he protests from the bottom of his heart that whatsoever they may be which it shall please Jesus to accord him, let it be imprisonment, calumny, opprobrium, sickness, or contempt, he accepts them all. "O sweet Saviour," he exclaims, "send me, obtain for me these trials, and eternally will I thank God and praise Thee for them." Does it not seem as though our Lord were showing him beforehand the sufferings that were awaiting him in the not far distant future? Yet a few years, and he will be thrown into prison, and condemned for the Name of Jesus, which he had boldly carried into the heart of a Protestant country.

The Spiritual Exercises generally terminate on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, either to

remind those who have taken part in them that it was the Blessed Virgin who inspired St. Ignatius with the idea, or for the placing of all new resolves under her powerful protection.

On that day Father Claude's heart overflows in loving and passionate effusions. Roused by the inestimable purity of Mary to desire that he may never do anything displeasing to her intense holiness, he vows that in the future he will be more faithful, and will by all possible means purify his heart, so as to induce our Lord to occupy it. "Come, O my God," he says, "and with the help of Thy grace Thou shalt find my heart purer and better swept. Never will I consent to give myself to other than to Thee; but, oh, come quickly, for I fear at times lest Thy creatures should defraud Thee." It is the same sentiment expressed by St. Philip Neri when he says, "Lord, distrust me, for I might betray Thee."

A great many reflections on different subjects are published with *The Spiritual Retreat*, probably from a desire on the part of the saintly student to preserve the remembrance of the lights and graces received during these special devotions. Thus it was that on Christmas Day this holy soul seemed, in the intimacy of its union with God, to be intoxicated with those spiritual delights which are so far removed from the things of this world. "Thou art indeed good, O my God," he cried on that day, "to reward so liberally the restraints which I impose upon myself. O my Sovereign and my sweet Master, cease I beseech Thee from overwhelming me with Thy blessings, for I recognize my own unworthiness of them. Thou wilt accustom me to serve Thee

from self-interest or Thou wilt lead me into exaggeration; for if Thou didst not oblige me to obey my director, of what is there that I should not be capable to deserve one moment of those sweet consolations which Thou dost vouchsafe me? Oh, foolish one that I am! did I say 'deserve'? Forgive me the word, O loving Father, for growing confused in the excess of Thy bounties, I know not what I say. Could I possibly 'deserve' the inestimable graces and consolations with which Thou dost surround and overwhelm me? No, my God, it is Thou alone, Who by Thy suffering dost procure them for me. For this be Thou eternally blessed, and shower down on me miseries and misfortunes, so as to give me some share in Thine. I shall not believe that Thou lovest me until Thou hast made me suffer both much and long." What delicacy and generosity of feeling are to be seen in these concluding words! What humility and what gratitude at the very moment when God has let him taste the sweet consolations of the Divine love![1]

The fervour which he extracted from a whole month of spiritual exercises in retreat is to be found fully sustained for the remainder of the year. We find him ever earnest in prayer, punctual in

[1] We have perhaps indulged ourselves in giving too long an extract from this work of Father de la Colombière, but as our readers may have no other means of making themselves acquainted with it, we little regret its place in the text. Although the style of the book is that of the seventeenth century, both in arrangement and expression, it must not be read with a view to its literary merits, for the *Retraite Spirituelle* was written and published without revision. Hence certain mistakes and negligences, which take nothing from the value of the whole. We think no really religious person could read this book without feeling that they are perusing the thoughts and experiences of a saint.

the observance of the minutest details, ready for any act of devotion or self-denial, genial and amiable towards his brethren of the Order, and submissive as a child to the will of his Superiors. Amongst the various exercises of neighbourly zeal and charity in use during the last period of probation are the religious instruction of the poor and the imprisoned, as also the visiting of the sick in hospital. At the approach of Lent the Fathers were sent forth to hold Missions for the evangelizing of the people. Most probably Father de la Colombière gave a course of preaching in some important town, but whether in Avignon or elsewhere we are unable positively to affirm; but there can be no doubt our Lord blessed his ministry. A most truly apostolic man, he added to exceptional talents, learning, and eloquence, the still greater and more efficient gift of holiness.

After Easter he returned to the loved and peaceful home of St. Joseph,[1] fatigued with the labourer's work, but satisfied with the harvest, and we find him resuming with joy the routine of that hidden life, through which he succeeded in establishing himself firmly in an intimate union with God. The festival of the Assumption was the regulated close of this life of prayer and solitude, and Father de la Colombière had to think of leaving a house which to us is embalmed with his virtues.

In the ardour of his zeal this true companion of Christ only lived for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. His life was no longer his own,

[1] St. Joseph's Home comprised the Novitiate and House of the Third Probationists. It has been destroyed, but its name is yet preserved in St. Joseph's Street.

but was given to God and to his neighbour, and from henceforth every moment of time became more precious to him. His whole existence was divided between the three principal occupations of an apostle, viz., prayer, study, and ministration. This jealous care never to lose a minute and this constant preparation for work explain to us how it is that Father de la Colombière, dying at the early age of forty-one, has been able to leave us seven or eight volumes of his writings.

As is the duty of a Religious who sees the will of God in that of his Superiors, he patiently awaited the order which, when it arrived, nominated him as head of the mission of Paray-le-Monial. We may be surprised at seeing a man of such rare merit, and one fitted to shine on a wider stage, ordered to fill so humble a position in a small town of Charolais ;[1] but it was the will of that Providence which directs all things in this world to confide to his care a mission which has brought him more honour with posterity than he could have earned in any more distinguished post. And we shall see later how his appointment to Paray was indicated by the finger of God.

[1] The intention of the Provincial in sending him to Paray was probably to give him more time for composition. Father de la Colombière was then but thirty-four years old.

CHAPTER VII.

Meeting with Blessed Margaret Mary.

1674—1676.

It was towards the close of the year 1674 that Père de la Colombière arrived at Paray-le-Monial. This little town, charmingly grouped around its magnificent church in the midst of rich pasture-lands on the banks of the Bourbince, had been chosen by Providence as the cradle of a touching and popular devotion, a devotion which rekindled in the seventeenth century the love of Jesus, amidst many surrounding phases of unbelief. There was to be revealed the chosen vessel destined to fulfil this glorious mission; there the hidden graces of the *Marguerite des Marguerites* grew and developed themselves. Long before, and in ways beyond human foresight, God had laid the foundations of this great work. As early as 1617 He had inspired that pious lady, Hippolyte de Gondi, sister of the High Admiral of France, wife of the Marquis du Raquy, Governor of Charolais, and sister-in-law of the Bishop of Autun, with a desire to found a Jesuit house at Paray for the destruction of heresy and the strengthening of the true faith in that neighbourhood. During the religious wars the town had been occupied by the Huguenots, whose doctrines, to the injury of the Catholic Church,

lingered amongst the people after they themselves had been driven from the district. To this task the Jesuits were easily induced to devote the utmost energy, and the Lord was pleased to send a blessing on their labours.

Père Paul de Barry took up his residence, and gained great influence, at Paray. He represented to his fellow-citizens that nothing would more effectually repair the ravages of Calvinism and restore the faith of their fathers to its original vigour, than the establishment amongst them of a community of devoted and hard-working nuns, who, whilst setting an example of a holy life, should give themselves to the education of the young of their own sex, and afford a refuge for such pious souls in the neighbourhood as desired to serve the Lord in the solitude of the cloister.

In words like these do the contemporaries of the saintly Margaret Mary describe the beginnings of this great work. They go on to tell us how about this time some young girls of Paray, anxious to embrace the religious life, and hearing of the exceeding piety of the newly-established Order of the Visitation, prayed the permission of the local authorities to found a convent in honour of the Blessed Mary in their native place. The Town Council, convinced that what they proposed was alike for the glory of God and the welfare of souls, and not unmindful of the advantages accruing to a township from the establishment of a religious community within its walls, willingly acceded to their request.

We see from the above that the municipality had no hesitation in avowing its Christian sentiments, and the good people of Paray may

therefore boast of their participation in the erection of the altar whereon later the Lord condescended to reveal His Sacred Heart. Again, we find Père Paul de Barry showing his interest in the new undertaking by soliciting for it the protection of those in power. "Before long all obstacles had disappeared, and the 4th of September, 1626, saw a little company of nuns from the Convent of the Visitation at Bellecours established in Paray." The annalists from whom we quote here gracefully remark: "The sons of Loyola to whom God had willed so conspicuous a part in the propagation of the worship of the Sacred Heart, could not fail to look with interest on the foundation of Paray, the cradle of that devotion."

The young community was not without its trials in these early days. At one moment, indeed, St. Jane Frances de Chantal feared that from lack of funds she might be obliged to recall her children to Lyons; but Providence, which had large designs for their future usefulness, came to their aid with all things necessary for their support. Forty-five years had elapsed since its foundation, when the monastery at Paray received within its walls the young and unknown girl destined to shed so much glory on the Order of the Visitation.

During the first three years of her residence in the convent to which she was to give a world-wide celebrity, this chosen vessel of Divine grace had been regarded with distrust by her spiritual director. Little skilled in the understanding of the human heart, and slow to discern the workings of the Spirit of God, her Superiors looked upon Margaret Mary as a poor misguided creature led

astray by a too vivid imagination. Many and great were the fears and anxieties of the trembling Religious during this painful time.

To listen to the voice of her conscience and follow its guidings was to expose herself to ridicule, and to incur the severest censures of those whom she had vowed to obey. What was she to do? Can we imagine any state more painful than that of a soul bound, as it seemed to her, by the voice of duty to resist the call of God Himself? This comforting assurance had indeed been made her: "Fear not, I will send My servant to you." But where was that promised guide? She had hitherto awaited him with an unrequited patience. At length, however, he had arrived. The newly-appointed Rector of the Jesuits was he whom God had chosen to be her support and guide. He came at the very moment of her greatest need, immediately after our Lord had appeared to her and for the second time shown her His Sacred Heart (a vision little likely to be understood by her immediate Superiors), and on the eve of the last and most important revelation with which she was favoured. It was Father de la Colombière who was to bring to her light out of darkness, and to participate with her in the high and extraordinary mission the Lord was about to confer on His servant.

We will convey to our readers in her own words the need in which Margaret Mary felt she stood of such a director.

Notwithstanding all the sorrows and anxieties to which I was exposed, the most profound peace reigned in my soul. Several learned people were commissioned

to talk with me and advise me, but they only, until the coming of Father de la Colombière, added to my difficulties. His arrival was in fulfilment of a promise made to me by my Divine Master shortly after my formal consecration to His holy service, in which He declared that He would send one of His servants to show me what He would have me to do. To him I was commanded to discover all the secrets and the riches of the Sacred Heart which had been communicated to me; my Sovereign Lord promising that out of the Divine treasure-house He would pour on His servant and on our future communications many and great consolations.

Much helpful intercourse existed between the Jesuit Fathers and the Convent of the Visitation at Paray, hence it was that immediately after his arrival the newly-appointed Superior found himself in communication with Sister Margaret Mary. She indeed relates that on the first occasion of his coming to pay his respects to the community she heard a voice within her saying: "This is he whom I have sent." That his mission to her was a very special one is apparent from the fact that on the Ember-days immediately succeeding his arrival he spoke to her as to one the secrets of whose heart were well known to him. He detained her an hour and a half in the confessional, but Margaret Mary, although well knowing that it was to him she was eventually to reveal all, abstained from so doing on this occasion, probably as not yet having received permission to do so from her Superiors.

The Father seeing that, in her fear of occupying the time of others, she was anxious to withdraw, asked her to come to him on some future occasion,

to which she replied, that being under obedience she would do in that matter as she should be desired. Some days later, Father de la Colombière gave, as he had been requested, a spiritual conference to the nuns, and was much struck while preaching with the angelic expression of Sister Margaret Mary, whose face he had never before seen. The same Spirit Who had revealed to each other the hearts of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances was about to unite these holy souls in a mysterious intimacy for the great work of love and mercy in which they were to be engaged.

The conference ended, the Father inquired of the Mother Superior who was the nun with whose recollection he had been so impressed. "That," said Madame de Saumaise, "was Sister Margaret Mary." "A soul," he replied, "to whom the Lord has imparted great grace."

These few words were of much import. Mother de Saumaise, having a very high estimation of the holiness and spiritual discernment of Father Claude, and being full of anxieties as to Sister Margaret Mary, determined, both in her own interests and those of the Sister, that she should open her whole soul to the Superior of the Jesuits. For this purpose she begged him to come to the convent, and at her desire Margaret Mary met him in the confessional. This she did with a repugnance of which, in making her confession, she failed not to accuse herself. "My daughter," replied the Father, "thank God Who has given you this opportunity of submitting yourself to His will." Thus exhorted, all Margaret Mary's

feelings of reserve vanished, and without further delay she opened her whole heart to her director, concealing nothing from him either of good or ill.

Father de la Colombière, well versed in the knowledge of human hearts, quickly recognized before him a soul under Divine influence, and perceived that, in the supernatural paths she had been treading, God Himself had been her guide. It was for him but to console and encourage her. Her devotion, her obedience, and profound humility were in themselves a proof of the presence in her heart of that holiness of spirit which makes illusion or error impossible. Father de la Colombière instructed his spiritual daughter to adore the Infinite Goodness which had not allowed itself to be repulsed by so long continued a resistance, and to receive with reverence the revelations that should be made her, and by continual acts of thanksgiving to express her gratitude for them. He exhorted her to continue in the practice of the strictest obedience, and in the abandonment of her whole being to God to be dealt with according to His holy will, at the same time enjoining her never without a special reason to speak to others of the favours she received.

Sister Margaret Mary complained to him of the difficulty she experienced in approaching God in vocal prayers. He advised her to content herself with saying only such as were of obligation, adding the use of the chaplet, but not to engage in devotions which had no attraction for her.

In this interview the Saint spoke openly of the Divine tenderness of Jesus to her soul, and of the ineffable union which existed between her Saviour

and herself, but made no direct communication as to the revelation of the Sacred Heart. Before she left the confessional, Father de la Colombière exhorted her afresh to keep herself as the recipient of such unspeakable favours in a state of the deepest humility. His penitent left him strengthened, consoled, and full of the liveliest gratitude for the presence of a director so well calculated to direct and support her in the many difficulties by which she was surrounded. Now and from henceforth Margaret Mary felt herself full of strength and courage to undertake whatever work the Lord might appoint.

Worldlings, who look on the priest as having no more to do than to administer the sacrament of reconciliation to his penitents, can little understand the painful anxieties which the holiest must feel when made the recipients of supernatural communications, those unknown and mysterious paths, which whilst touching the sublimest heights, skirt the most alarming abysses. To what frightful peril would not the imprudent tourist be exposed who attempted to reach an Alpine summit without a competent guide! Who then would dream of climbing the mountain of heavenly perfection unassisted by an experienced hand?

The more delicate and rare the flower, the greater is its need of the unremitting care of the gardener. Elect souls, such as St. Teresa and St. Jane Frances, in whom Divine grace, flowing with the force of a rushing stream, produces its own supernatural effects, demand above all others the guidance of a watchful director who shall discern the workings of the Spirit, detect the

approaches of error, sustain the soul in trial, and keep it humble in the presence of God; that thus instructed and fortified it may soar above the things of time, unshackled in its upward flight. Such to a remarkable degree was the result to Margaret Mary of the direction of Father de la Colombière. A letter written by her many years after his death bears ample testimony, how much she believed herself indebted to his enlightened guidance. Referring to the long and painful period during which so many around her thought she was the victim of the grossest self-deception, she says: "Thinking I must certainly be mistaken, I strenuously endeavoured to bring my mind into accord with that of my Superiors, but all my efforts to do so were vain. Then I began to despair and thought I should indeed be lost, since I had no power to resist the spirit within me and was told it was not of God.

"My state at this time and until the arrival of Father Claude, revealed to me to be the faithful servant and friend of God, was truly most pitiable. When, however, this holy director, assuring me of the heavenly nature of my inspirations, urged me to follow their guidance, my grief was quickly assuaged. Since that moment I have enjoyed unbroken peace and tranquillity of mind amidst all the crosses, humiliations, and sufferings with which, to my joy and consolation, my Divine Master has honoured His unworthy handmaid."

He to whom God had given the title of "His servant," who united a great discernment to much experience, was well qualified to form an estimate of the mental state of Sister Margaret Mary, and

on his opinion we feel we may rely. So prejudiced, however, were many of her contemporaries, that, even after his judgment had been pronounced, they still regarded her as a visionary, suffering, had that phrase then existed, from an hallucination. On Father de la Colombière they looked compassionately, as on one who like others had been deceived by the overwrought fancies of an imaginative girl. The calumnies had, as we may easily believe, no effect on the Reverend Father, who continued to give his paternal care to Sister Margaret Mary, not only during his stay at Paray, but until the close of his life. The Saint often expressed her astonishment at his patience, wondering that the many annoyances to which he was exposed on her account, and her own deficiencies, had not induced him to abandon her. She believed that no other director would have borne with her for so long.

Her natural humility doubtlessly exaggerated her own defects, which probably consisted in the ever recurring anxieties and weaknesses to which, notwithstanding the counsels and encouragements of her confessor, she was subject. Whatever they may have been, his patience and kindness never failed her, nor did he belie her generous love to God by sparing her either humiliations or crosses.

Since it throws much light on certain later parts of our narrative, we must not omit a communication which Margaret Mary made about this time to Father de la Colombière. One day she said to him, "Our Lord has granted me many favours on behalf of certain persons to whom, for His greater glory, He wishes that I should communicate them either by writing or speaking, as He shall hereafter reveal.

I am not to occupy myself in thinking how I shall speak or write these matters, the grace of God accompanying my words will produce the blessed effects intended for the edification of those who receive them rightly. For myself, I am deeply humiliated at the repugnance which I feel to writing and communicating these revelations."

Her wise director engaged her, however, to obey at whatever cost of humiliation and sacrifice the promptings of the Divine voice. She was to give her notes when written to her Superior, who would do with them as she was directed. This arrangement, notwithstanding the pain it cost her, Margaret Mary carried out, and at a later period, communicated by this means with Father de la Colombière in his absences from Paray. When later the Saint was enjoined to commit to writing the communications of God to her soul, so great was her repugnance to draw up this memorial that she threw the paper when written into the fire. Her confessor and her own conscience soon however convinced her that she had failed in the spirit of obedience, and from henceforth she carefully preserved a written account of her successive revelations.

On another occasion, our Lord commanded her to dictate in His favour a will or testament, such as she had already verbally made, of all her sufferings and good works, as well as of all spiritual gifts which might be bestowed on her either during her life or after her death. This deed she was to beg her Superior to write out, to whom a reward in case of compliance was promised, but should she refuse, the task was to be confided to that servant of the Lord, Father de la Colombière (1678). Her

Divine Master seemed anxious to assure her that this holy priest was indeed one of His elect, who would aid her in all her undertakings, and to whose assistance she might look in every difficulty. Our Lord specially designated him "His servant." Could any higher honour be given him? Does not such an appellation make his name for ever great? So marked were the teachings of Providence which led to his appointment as director to Margaret Mary that many saintly people, his contemporaries, recognized the special nature of the call. One of his spiritual daughters, Mlle. Rosalie de Lyonne, asked Father Forest, at that time Prefect of the College, how it was that so distinguished a man as Father de la Colombière had been banished to Paray. If we may believe the anecdote, Father Forest's answer will go far to explain the residence of Father de la Colombière at Paray. "He has been sent there," replied the prefect, "in the interests of a saintly person needing his direction." God had so arranged that the assistance she so much required reached His handmaid at the critical moment. When all human help had failed, and God was her only refuge, Father de la Colombière appears to soothe her sorrows and calm her anxieties, and by his sensible and pious advice to reassure the Mother Superior, greatly troubled by the responsibilities of the situation. And now his mission to Paray accomplished, and the wonderful work of mercy the Lord is carrying out in that convent revealed to him, he is removed from this to another sphere of labour. But later, when the Saint, rudely assailed by the evil one, is about to fall into despair, Father de la Colombière is again sent to Paray,

and permitted, during a visit of a few days, to console and edify her.

It seems, indeed, that to members of the Society of Jesus the grace necessary for her direction was specially given. After the departure of Father de la Colombière she found in Father Ignatius Rollin a faithful depositary of the Divine marvels of which she was the recipient. The Jesuits always held her in the highest veneration, and she gave them her fullest confidence.

But it was not only to minister to the saintly Margaret Mary that Father de la Colombière had been called to Paray; the duties of a great and holy apostolate were, as we shall presently see, to be there confided to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

1674—1676.

It was the intention of our Lord that Father de la Colombière should be not only the guide and consolation of the Blessed Margaret Mary, but also her fellow-worker in the development of the devotion of the Sacred Heart, and the words in which the Church honours St. John, the Beloved Disciple, may well be applied to the subject of our memoir, "O blessed Apostle, to whom are made known the secrets of the Most High!" It was on the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, whilst he was celebrating Mass in the Chapel of the Visitation, that a fresh revelation was vouchsafed to her, announcing the Divine intention that he should have part in this mission. She had just drawn near the altar when our Lord showed her His Heart, burning as it were in a furnace, and with It two other hearts, which seemed about to melt and lose themselves in It.

"It is thus," said He, "that My love will knit these three hearts together for ever." She was then commanded to reveal to Father de la Colombière the treasures and glories of the Sacred Heart, for the increase of Whose honour this union was to be effected, and Whose spiritual gifts were henceforth

to be impartially divided between the Father and herself.

When, upon hearing this, she took exception to her own poverty and the spiritual inequality which existed between so saintly a man and a wretched sinner like herself, our Lord answered, "All deficiencies shall be supplied, and all inequalities equalized from the infinite riches of My Heart; address yourself, therefore, to My servant without further hesitation." What was the surprise of Père de la Colombière when at their next interview she carried out these instructions, and he learnt that God had chosen him as an instrument for the future glorification of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The consciousness of his own unworthiness overwhelmed him, and Margaret Mary declared that no sermon she had ever heard affected her so deeply as the profound humility with which the Reverend Father received her communication.

Our Lord had not yet spoken openly of the institution of the feast of the Sacred Heart. He had indeed already established the *Heure Sainte*, the Communion of the first Friday in the month, and was now about to give permission for the public and special adoration of His Sacred Heart. "It was indeed a touching and noble thought that the joyous strains of the *Lauda Sion* should be succeeded by the notes of the *Miserere*, and that the public worship of the Divine Host should conclude with a solemn act of reparation."

Our Blessed Lord, before giving this new command, vouchsafed to the Saint two revelations, in which He particularly dwelt on the ardent love of His Heart for man; but such love, He explained,

exists not without suffering; hence it was that, in further revealing its depths, He bared the desire of His Heart for consolation, and Its need of expiation. But we should prefer relating the vision in Margaret Mary's own words:—

Whilst kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament during the octave of the 16th June, 1675, I received from my God the most lively expressions of His love. He inspired me with a tender desire to return love for love, and said to me, "You can in no way more fully express your feelings towards Me than by doing that which I have so often begged you to do." Then, discovering to me His Heart, "Look," He said, "at this Heart, which so loved men that It shrank not from shedding in their behalf the last drop of Its blood, and in return receives nothing from them in general but ingratitude. They cease not to outrage Me by irreverence and sacrileges, and what adds ten-fold to the bitterness of their ingratitude, is the coldness with which such as are specially dedicated to My service treat Me in this Sacrament of My love.

"It is therefore in reparation for the indignities to which the Sacred Heart has been subject when exposed on the altars of the Church that I have commanded the faithful to communicate on the first Friday after the octave of the Blessed Sacrament, and that that day be kept as a festival in honour of My Sacred Heart. In return, I promise that from that fountain of My love shall come forth on that day an abundance of Divine grace on all such as observe this feast, and induce others to do so."

When the Saint in her humility represented to our Lord that she was too insignificant a person to carry out these designs, He replied, "Do you not

know that it is My custom to choose the poor and those of small account to confound the mighty; that it is through the poor in heart that My Spirit effects the greatest triumphs, that they therein may take no honour to themselves?" "Show me then, O Lord," she cried, "in what way I may accomplish that which Thou hast commanded." "Put yourself in communication," He replied, "with the Jesuit Father de la Colombière, and bid him from Me exert all his influence to establish this devotion, and thus give consolation to My Divine Heart. Let him not be discouraged by the difficulties he will meet with in this enterprise, for he who puts his confidence in Me is indeed all-powerful."

When this vision was communicated by Margaret Mary to her director, no shadow of hesitation with regard to it crossed his mind. A man of infinite discernment, he was not given to believe anything on insufficient evidence, but the personal holiness of his penitent made it in his opinion impossible that she should be the victim of any unholy delusion.

He desired her to commit the vision to writing, that he might study it at his leisure, and indeed preserved the document to the end of his life. Having examined it in prayer before God, Father de la Colombière, guided by the light of the sanctuary, solemnly declared to Blessed Margaret Mary that he could entertain no doubt as to its Divine origin, or of her obligation implicitly to obey it. From that moment she willed herself without reserve to the service of the Sacred Heart, offering It a purer homage than It will often again receive on earth.

Father de la Colombière, wishing to be united in this holy consecration, dedicated himself to a life of

devotion on the morrow of the octave of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, Friday, June 21, 1675. This was the day the Lord had selected to be for ever the feast of the Sacred Heart. Thus, in the persons of a saintly priest and a holy virgin, did the Heart of Jesus receive the first-fruits of the universal adoration so soon to be offered It by the Church.

Father de la Colombière was now fully invested with the high and holy mission of establishing the devotion of the Sacred Heart, and became the apostle of a service of love and reparation, whose chiefest obligation was to make the Heart of Jesus known and adored throughout the world.

And now, whilst extolling the wisdom of the Most High in selecting Father de la Colombière for this great work, it may be well to pause in our narrative and mark the reason of the Divine choice. It was necessary that he to whom this mission was confided should have the power to make the world his audience, and to rivet the gaze of all on the Heart of Jesus, known hitherto but to a few, whilst before a new festival could appear in the calendar of the Church, the ear of the Sacred Pontiff had to be gained.

Some may say, would it not have been well that a bishop or celebrated preacher should have been selected for such an undertaking? Did not France possess at that very moment an illustrious man who would have proclaimed, with the weight of authority and the power of genius, the mysteries of the Sacred Heart? Would not that eminent and accomplished prelate, the future Archbishop of Cambrai, have lent the charms of his eloquence to

a subject so well fitted to fire his imagination and fascinate his heart?

Such a man would indeed have been easily found in France at that time, but in accordance with a Divine arrangement, of which the history of the Church presents us with many examples, this honour was not to be conferred on one of high degree. It was characteristic of the devotion of the Sacred Heart that it should be established noiselessly and unobtrusively. Margaret Mary, in her ardent longing for Its universal love and adoration, often lamented to her Divine Lord the incapacity of the instruments He had chosen, whilst the influence, she urged, of greater learning and authority would immensely promote the spread of the devotion she had at heart. Then did our Lord condescend to explain to her that as it was to the poor and despised His Sacred Heart was specially to be revealed, and Its triumph to be set up amidst the opposition and contempt of the world, it would be most inappropriate to look to any earthly influence for its success.

A member of the Society of Jesus, a man poor and despised, an object of hatred to the world, was well fitted for this mission. Hence the Divine choice of Père de la Colombière was fully justified, and we need seek no further the motives which suggested it. Whilst on this subject we cannot, however, forbear transcribing an eloquent passage from a recent life of Blessed Margaret Mary. The author is speaking of the choice of her confessor.

In selecting her director from the Society of Jesus the Almighty designed to recompense in his person the services which that valiant band had rendered to the faith

during the great religious struggles of the sixteenth century, when by the zeal of its founder, the heroism of its earliest members, and the might of its theologians, it contributed so largely to the suppression of heresy and the edification of the faithful. Perhaps also its Divine Master was pleased thus to mark His approval of the attitude it took when, in the seventeenth century, Jansenism began to throw its baneful shade over Western Europe, for without diminishing aught of the Justice of the Infinite, the Jesuits have never failed to keep distinctly before the eyes of their people the boundlessness of the Divine mercy and love, which the teaching of Jansen so perversely ignored. It is also to be remarked that in return for such services as raising the educational standard of Christianity, civilizing Paraguay, evangelizing Japan, enriching the museums of Europe with the most valuable discoveries, shedding their blood on many a distant shore, and, above all, refreshing the whole world with the odour of its sanctity, the Society of Jesus was about to be persecuted and banished, its most illustrious and venerable members condemned to prison or to death, and that it well became the justice of Heaven to countenance and console it with this visible sign of favour. For all these reasons it was well that the priest chosen to verify and proclaim the revelations of the Sacred Heart should be one of this Society.

For ourselves, indeed, we cannot say whether it entered into the counsels of the Most High thus to recompense the services which the Society of Jesus had been permitted to render the Catholic Church, but we shall for ever bless our Divine Lord for choosing this first disciple of His Sacred Heart from our number, and confiding the propagation of this glorious and loving devotion to the Society of Jesus.

Father de la Colombière devoted himself in-

stantly to the work, beginning by inviting all his penitents to communicate on the first Friday after the octave of the Blessed Sacrament. And during the remainder of his life his correspondence abounds with a similar recommendation to all who came under his influence. In a letter to the Superior of a convent given in the eighth edition of his works, he says, "I write to you to-day praying your community to make a special Communion on the morrow of the octave of the Blessed Sacrament, in reparation for all the irreverences to which our Lord Jesus Christ has been subject whilst exposed on the altars of the Church." To his sister the nun in the Convent of the Visitation at Condrien, he writes, "I beg you, in reparation for the indignities offered to our Lord, to communicate on the Friday immediately after the octave of Corpus Christi. This custom has been recommended by a person of extraordinary sanctity, who assures me the greatest benefits shall accrue to those who offer this mark of love to our Lord. Try to engage your friends in the practice of a like devotion. I pray that in many communities it may be commenced this year and be for ever continued."

He often begins his letters thus—"My dear sister in the love and in the Heart of our common Lord," or ends by begging his correspondent to pray for "your devoted servant in the Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The desire of the good Father to spread the devotion seemed to grow greater every day, as he realized more vividly the happy effects which it produced in souls. The blessed promises attached by our Lord to this devotion were realized a

hundred-fold, and the happy results effected in many souls, and the extraordinary graces he himself received therefrom daily, confirmed the love and quickened the zeal of Father de la Colombière for the furtherance of this holy practice. Our readers however would be mistaken did they think that the name and authority of Father de la Colombière, or his reputation for learning and piety, sufficed to dispel all the obstacles and difficulties attendant on this undertaking. Margaret Mary herself was a stumbling-block to many both amongst her intimates and strangers, and Father de la Colombière, though venerated as a saint, lost somewhat of his reputation for discretion when it was perceived with what respect he regarded her.

Let us not wonder that these trials and crosses existed, for they are the almost invariable accompaniments of the works of God. But the servant of God, strong in his reliance on assistance from above, looks not behind him, but goes forward in an unassailable confidence that the work of the Lord shall ultimately prosper. He himself may die before the completion of the work which would have made his name illustrious, but the prospect of such an eventuality affects him but little. He came at the appointed time to support and guide the disciple of the Sacred Heart, and now, devoting himself to the noble mission confided to his charge, he feels confident that God will bring the labours of his apostolate to a perfect end.

The Superior of the Jesuits at Paray exerted all his influence to bring souls to Christ. Young and attractive both in mind and person, he possessed in an extraordinary degree the gifts which charm and fascinate in every

relation of life. His language and manners were exceedingly refined, and his whole bearing conveyed that sense of completeness which distinguishes the cultivated mind. All his movements were gentle and unaffected, whilst the dignity of his carriage added grace to his most trivial actions, and his habitual intercourse with Heaven impressed its stamp upon his dealings with men. In a word, as one who knew him well remarked, his every action, whether alone or in society, was so void of self-consciousness and self-seeking, that all who came in contact with him acknowledged the influence of an honest man and a perfect Religious.

Under this description, however vague and, according to the fashion of the sixteenth century, however oratorical, we cannot fail to recognize the pious and humble Superior of Paray. He was much beloved in that town, and the confidence which he inspired drew to his confessional so large a number of persons, anxious to put themselves under his wise and enlightened direction, that his time was much occupied at this period, when, besides his duties as Rector of the College, he was often called on to preach in the parish church of St. Nicolas, and in the convents of Paray and Charolles. He placed the Superior of the Convent of the Visitation of this latter town, Françoise Lucrèce, in communication with Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque, to be by her initiated in the devotion of the Sacred Heart. There also he founded, under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, a congregation of gentlemen and artisans; for no distinction of class can exist between those united in acts of faith and charity. With its assistance he established the Asylum of St. Louis for

vagrants and incurables, at the same time interesting himself in the enlargement of the hospital of the town. He was sometimes called away to preach on special occasions elsewhere, such as at the funeral of Madame de Nerestang, Abbess of Bénissons-Dieu. This lady had been a great benefactress of the Society of Jesus, whose members, anxious to mark their gratitude, commissioned Father de la Colombière to attend the ceremony of her interment as their representative. In the funeral oration he spoke with much unction and piety of the virtues of this saintly woman, in whom so much force of character had been united to exemplary holiness.[1]

We know not where he preached the Lents of 1675 and 1676. A humble and devoted missionary, having no object in view but the glory of God and the good of souls, he went wherever he was sent, and returned, his mission over, peaceful and content to the little convent of Paray. We may gather, from a distinct allusion in the following passage of a letter to his sister, Margaret Elisabeth, how numerous were the occupations which absorbed his time at this period:

How much, notwithstanding all your trials, should I envy you your retreat, did I not know that the greatest good consists in doing that which our Master has appointed. I am also persuaded, my good sister, that no occupation undertaken for religious motives, need

[1] The funeral oration of Madame de Nerestang is published amongst the writings of Father de la Colombière. The "Bénissons-Dieu" was a convent of the nuns of the Order of St. Benoît, in the diocese of Lyons, near Charlieu.

overwhelm one, but it is difficult to keep near God when constantly in the society of men, to preserve the tranquillity of mind essential to holiness when you have four times as much to do as time will permit, and to keep a watch over your own soul when you have barely a moment in the day to crave for it the Divine protection. Such things have to be done, and they are far from easy, but such must I do if I am myself to be what I desire to see you.

Father de la Colombière's influence in the town of Paray was very great. Contemporary notices have transmitted to us the favourable impression produced by his first sermon in the parish church, where he literally took his audience by storm, and whilst he charmed, converted them. The biographers of Blessed Margaret Mary have given us the history of Mlle. Rosalie de Lyonne, remarkable for the length of the conflict, the sweetness of the action of God, and its great patience. We give such portions of the narrative as relate to Father de la Colombière.

His wonderful eloquence had made a profound impression on this young lady, who, whilst listening to a sermon preached by him in the Ursuline Chapel on the feast of St. Augustine, felt herself unable longer to resist the working of God's grace. As the Reverend Father described the hesitations and reluctances, and mental struggles of the son of St. Monica, it seemed to Mlle. de Lyonne as if, in the congregation, he were addressing her alone, and she was ready to cry out with St. Augustine, "Oh, lovely and celestial holiness, eternal yet always fresh, too late have I known, too late have I loved you!" And though amidst all the vanities and

temptations of the world she had kept her soul unstained by greater sin, she felt herself to have as much cause for regret and mourning as that illustrious penitent. And thinking she recognized in the preacher the guide whom the Lord had promised her, she gave him henceforth her entire confidence. Father de la Colombière perceived that this was a soul which God had chosen for Himself, designing to save it from the corruptions of the age, and gather it into the arms of His love. It was then for His priest to lead her by gentle steps in the way that Providence had appointed. And so attractive did he make for her the path of piety, that henceforth she engaged without hesitation in practices of devotion which had hitherto filled her with apprehension. She afterwards acknowledged that but for his judicious care she would probably have been soon discouraged, but, happy in his guidance, she forsook all worldly engagements to listen to his instructions. She had hitherto been admired solely for her personal attractions, to these she now added those of the heart and mind, whilst her appearance lost none of its charms, though she ceased to devote her time to the cares of her toilette. She now found herself capable of practising austerities from the very mention of which she would hitherto have shrunk. When at Lyons she visited the hospital, and found her delight in kneeling before the altar of the chapel. Father de la Colombière instructed her in the practice of prayer, and advised her to place an hour-glass before her to regulate the length of her devotions. "I will take care, Father," she answered, "not to set a measure to the time I spend with God!"

And henceforth she remained at the foot of the altar as long as her wishes prompted her.

She had already made considerable progress in piety when her wise and fatherly guide was taken from her. This was a severe trial, under which her only consolation was the receipt of his letters, wherein he kept alive his interest in her spiritual welfare.

Another conversion much spoken of at the time was that of the daughter of a Calvinist minister lately married to M. Guinet de Maréchalle, a recent convert to the Catholic Church. This lady, overbearing in character and in the enunciation of her religious views, determined, and only too successfully, to bring back her husband to the tenets of her sect. But shortly after his relapse the unfortunate young man was stung by remorse, and unable to hide his misery from his wife, entreated her not to oppose his return to the Catholic faith, in whose teaching he felt he could alone hope for salvation. She, however, declared he should die rather than carry out such an idea, she having determined they should both remain members of the communion in which they had been brought up. In spite of him, she educated her children in the errors which she herself professed.

The youngest daughter, Anne, was a special favourite of her father, who treated her with a tenderness in striking contrast to the severity she experienced from her mother. Madame de Maréchalle's violent temper vented itself not only on her daughter Anne, but also on her husband, who finding his family circle thus unendurable, sought, by inviting his neighbours to many parties of

pleasure, to escape the burden of her society. The Castle of Maréchalle was situated within a league of Paray, and this indiscriminate hospitality soon brought the family to ruin, whilst his tragic death completed its misery. It was only a fortnight before the catastrophe that he once more earnestly entreated his wife on his knees to let him live as a Catholic, and bring up his children in the true faith. At this address she flew into a violent passion, declaring she would sooner poniard him than consent to this. Thus repulsed, but still hoping to gain her permission on some more favourable occasion, he again sought to forget his sorrow in the excitement of society. One day, coming home after a too convivial meeting with his friends, he was drowned in a brook not far from his own house. His horse returning to the castle, trembling and riderless, gave the alarm, but before help could reach him, the unfortunate man had ceased to breathe.

Six months later Madame de Maréchalle, seeking some alleviation for her grief, came to Paray, when it pleased God that, through the instrumentality of Father de la Colombière, the truth penetrating her soul, she renounced her errors, and abjured her Protestantism. Her conversion was sincere, and she hastened to repair the past by placing her youngest daughter under the care of the Ursuline nuns for instruction in the Catholic faith. But the elder ones forced her, under the plea of economy, to withdraw their sister, and deriding their mother's entreaties, succeeded in perverting the child. In her grief, Madame de Maréchalle fled for help to Father de la Colombière, and under his direction

brought the girl to the Convent of the Visitation, where she finally made her abjuration of Protestantism on the 8th of June, 1677, and later entered the Novitiate.

Whilst the Superior of the Jesuits at Paray was reaping such happy results from his labours, it was revealed to Blessed Margaret Mary that he would soon be summoned to preach the Gospel beyond the soil of France. It was from her lips that he received the first intimation of this change.

But a short time had elapsed since his profession on the 2nd of February, 1675, and Father de la Colombière, animated with the most fervent desire to give himself wholly to God, awaited the moment when the Divine will as to his future destination should be communicated to him through his Superiors. The summons for his departure arrived, but spoke of no foreign mission ; a second message changed the order of route which Father de la Colombière was hastening to obey ; a third, more pressing and definite, ordered him to Paris on his way to England.

The news of his departure was a painful surprise to the good people of Paray, whose affection and esteem he had won during his year and a half's residence amongst them. The vicar and assistant priests of the parish church were his intimate friends, nobles and people alike loved him, and the religious communities of the town and neighbourhood felt they were losing in Father de la Colombière a holy man and wise director. No words can express the sorrow of his spiritual children at this event. Sister Margaret Mary, though receiving the announcement with entire

submission to the Divine will, could not but foresee how great would be the loss to her of so courageous and enlightened a guide. What would now be her fortune? would she ever fall again into the hands of those who, already prejudiced against her, were determined to refuse all the Lord required of her? But at this moment she heard the voice of the Saviour within her saying, in tones of tenderest reproach, "Do not I suffice thee, I, Who am thy beginning and end?" At these words she yielded, abandoning her future without reserve or fear to the good pleasure of God. Before leaving, Father de la Colombière committed to writing, in a series of instructions, what he proposed should be her future line of conduct in presence of the revelations of the Lord to her soul. Our readers will be struck with the clearness and precision of this document, from which we give the following extract: "The Lord asks you for Himself without reserve, wishing to feel that you are wholly His, ready to obey at any moment His slightest wish. From you He expects nothing in return, willing all that is in you to spring from Him only, desiring you to leave yourself passively in His hands, to be treated according to His will, that to Him may be all the glory, and that He alone may be known, praised, and loved eternally."

For himself, Father de la Colombière wished that such instructions regarding his forthcoming mission as might be communicated to his spiritual daughter should be forwarded to him. She did indeed write a few lines, which he often declared were of much service to him in the very difficult circumstances attending his new and perilous

undertaking, and under the blessing of Heaven, he attributed his future success to the advice which now, and at a later period, Blessed Margaret Mary communicated to him through her Superior.

The hearts of the children of God are always loving hearts, and although separated from them by leagues of land and sea, Father de la Colombière never forgot his friends at Paray. In his correspondence we find many letters addressed to the aged vicar of that place, to members of the congregation, to the nuns of the Convent of the Visitation, and to his spiritual daughter Margaret Mary, in all of which we find him occupied with their spiritual and eternal interests.

CHAPTER IX.

Father de la Colombière in England.

ENGLAND had ceased to be the isle of saints, the land of miracles. The schism of Henry VIII. had separated her from the Church, and since his day her change of dynasty had effected no change in her religious system, for the Stuarts, in succeeding to the throne of the Tudors, had not restored the spiritual supremacy of the Holy See. Hopes at least were still, however, entertained of the restoration of the Catholic faith. After the tragic death of Charles I. and Cromwell's tyrannical Protectorate, a new order of things was inaugurated with the unexpected return of Charles II. The Queen of England, Catharine of Braganza, was a Catholic, and the Duke of York, brother of the King, and heir presumptive to the Crown, publicly professed the Roman faith, and was disposed to begin his reign by proclaiming complete liberty of conscience.

If, however, the religious antipathies of the nation had been excited by the conversion of James, Duke of York, to Catholicism, they were still more exasperated at his recent marriage with a Catholic Princess, Mary of Modena. The danger threatening Protestantism by this union became the subject of general conversation, and Charles II.

found himself exposed to the public discontent. Naturally indolent, solely occupied with his own pleasures, and ever ready to sacrifice his best friends to the ambitious and dissatisfied amongst his subjects, it was impossible to rely on his firmness either to repulse the attacks or circumvent the designs of the enemies of the Catholic Church. A chivalrous feeling of honour prevented his trying to break off the marriage, though he dared not defend his own brother, to whom he was sincerely attached, openly. At the meeting of Parliament it was thought fit to interrogate the King on the reports circulating as to a marriage with the Princess of Modena. "It is not a report," answered Charles, "it is an accomplished fact." And when the House of Commons, recovering from the momentary stupefaction into which they had been thrown by this announcement, vociferously demanded that the marriage should be annulled, and the Papist Princess forbidden to enter England, Charles declared that his honour was involved, and that he could not dissolve a union sanctioned by all laws, human and Divine. The malcontents then, falling back on the plan of a public manifestation of their displeasure, implored the King's permission to proclaim a solemn fast to avert the evils this alliance would bring upon the country.

On the arrival of Mary Beatrice at Dover, she was met by James, and their previous marriage by procuration was declared valid by the Bishop of Oxford. They then proceeded to London, where the beauty of the young Princess triumphed over the malice of her enemies, and the charm of her manner, her grace, and above all, the purity which

shone in her face, a rare gift at the Court of Charles II., won for her all hearts. The King himself was much attracted by her, but never allowed his admiration to deviate from the sincerest respect and esteem. Many of the highest nobles were at this time amongst the staunchest supporters of the Duke and Duchess of York.

Mary Beatrice found it very difficult to accustom herself to the ways and manners of the English Court, which were very distasteful to her, and sadly at variance with those of grave and Catholic Modena. The Duchess of York lived in St. James' Palace, universally loved and respected for the exemplary manner in which she fulfilled her often complex duties as wife and sister-in-law, as a stranger and a Catholic. But nothing could disarm the hatred of the Protestant party, to whom she was obnoxious as the perpetuator on the throne of Great Britain of the line of Catholic princes. Hence the secret and implacable opposition to the Duke of York, the Catholics, and the Duchess herself. At the head of this party, composed of the remnants of Cromwell's republicans and Presbyterians, was Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, whose notorious impiety did not prevent his assuming the leadership of the Evangelical faction. A persecutor of the Papists, he might be an atheist with impunity. This faction, whilst sheltering itself behind loyalty, aimed in reality at seizing the executive power, and was well aware how futile would be its endeavours, so long as James retained his hold over the affections of the people and his place in the royal councils. "It required great audacity and yet greater malice

to accomplish the ruin of such a Prince."[1] The work of intrigue and perfidy had, however, begun. The Presbyterian party demanded the instant revival of those oppressive laws which had somewhat fallen into disuse, and Charles, adopting the fatal system of concession, hoped to calm the fears and allay the murmurs of his people by enforcing the measures against the Catholics with the utmost rigour. He began by refusing the Duchess of York the use of a public chapel, although such a permission had been particularly stipulated for in the marriage contract.[2] An ordinance was then published forbidding Catholics to enter the parks and palaces of St. James' and of Whitehall under pain, were the delinquent a peer, of incarceration in the Tower, or in case of a commoner, of confinement in the common gaol. In fine, the penal laws were again put in full force against the faithful.

These severe measures did not, however, satisfy the leaders of the Protestant party, or induce them to abate aught of the vigour of their attack. And when, in the beginning of 1674, Parliament again assembled, new motions hostile to the Catholics were introduced by the Earl of Shaftesbury, Algernon Sydney, and Lord Russell, whose main object was the exclusion of the Duke of York from the throne. The following year, 1675, an adventurer named Luzancy (precursor of the infamous Titus Oates), an old offender in France, made his appearance in London.

[1] *Memoirs of Lord Peterborough.*

[2] To give some colour to this breach of faith the Queen was induced to claim the chapel in St. James' Palace as her own, though she used that at Somerset House.

This bold intriguer, without money and without introduction, presented himself under a feigned name, desiring to be received into the Established Church, and to abjure Catholicism. He instantly became an object of the greatest interest to the more bigoted amongst the Protestant party, and doubtless wishing for notoriety, and hoping to secure future assistance, declared that, about a month before his abjuration, Father St. Germain, introduced to him as confessor of the Duchess of York, had come suddenly upon him in his room, and holding a dagger to his heart had forced him to sign a retractation of faith and an engagement to return to France.

Neither the improbability of the tale nor the length of time that had elapsed without his speaking of the assault, awakened the slightest doubt as to the truth of the allegation. The House of Lords communicated the "important document" to the King, and the Court, the city, and the country resounded with cries of horrified astonishment at the audacity of the Papists. The King commanded the arrest of Father St. Germain, wherever he might be found. Luzancy, examined before the House of Commons, insisted that the streets of London were in daily danger of being flooded with Protestant blood. For this assertion he could, however, bring no proof; it was indeed nothing but a repetition of absurd rumours originating and spreading in city taverns.

In the meantime a French Protestant minister, well acquainted with Luzancy's antecedents, had the courage and honesty to unmask him, and a clever and forcible pamphlet appeared refuting all

the calumnies and accusations brought against Father St. Germain. Upon this further inquiry was stopped and never renewed. The Father thus falsely accused had, however, to quit England to escape death, leaving the post of preacher to the Duchess of York vacant, which it was now proposed should be filled by a French Jesuit. A request to this effect was submitted to Louis XIV., who communicated it at once to his confessor, Father de la Chaise, charging him to find one of his Order capable of filling this honourable and arduous post. Father de la Chaise had formerly been Provincial of the Province of Lyons; indeed, it was from that post he was removed when called on to succeed Father Ferrier as director of the royal conscience. He had known Father de la Colombière at the College of the Holy Trinity, where he had many opportunities of observing his talents and virtues, and now did not hesitate to propose him as confessor to the Duchess of York. To this arrangement the then Provincial, Pierre Boyer, taken by surprise, and doubtless having other plans for the future, at first demurred, but afterwards consented, and Father de la Colombière received orders to hold himself in readiness for departure. Doubtless that guiding Providence which conducts the smallest events in the history of man was not indifferent to this choice. Zealous, yet prudent, possessed of fine oratorical powers, intrepid courage, and a heart eager to suffer for the Name of Jesus, God had destined His servant for this mission, for which no one could have been better fitted. Many dangers awaited him in a country "where it was a crime to

be a priest, a greater to be a Jesuit, and where every devotional act fell under the ban of public opinion." Father de la Colombière had vowed "to go wherever he might be sent, asking no questions." He was ready. The post to which his Superiors appointed him might be fraught with dangers and difficulties, but in its defence he would gladly toil and suffer, for suffering had to him an attraction. Was he not offering his very heart's core to God? For he could not leave without regret his beloved Paray, where he had many friends, where he had learnt to appreciate the pure soul of a living Saint, and where he himself had received the most striking marks of Divine favour.

In order to avoid useless remonstrances and regrets, he told no one of his approaching departure, and it was not until quite the last moment that he announced what was his destination. "They are sending me to England," he wrote to a Superior, "as confessor to the Duchess of York. I cannot see the end, but God's will be done." It was in so calm a frame of mind, and with such steady trust in God that he prepared for the mission entrusted to his care, speaking of it as though alluding to any ordinary journey. The order to start came sooner than he had expected, and remembering the example of St. Francis Xavier, he denied himself the pleasure of bidding his family farewell, and, though passing not far from his father's house, would neither see any of his relations nor inform them of the honourable post to which he had been appointed. An exceeding detachment from the things of earth, and an earnest desire to obey the

will of God, these were his only preparations for his arduous journey.

Leaving Paray he passed through Rouen, thence to Paris, there to take the final orders of Father de la Chaise, or rather of Louis XIV., whose political views, on this occasion in accordance with his religion, constituted him a supporter of Charles II. and the Catholic party on the other side of the Straits. Father de la Colombière embarked at Calais, and arrived in London on October 13th, 1676.

CHAPTER X.

At the English Court.

1676.

"A GUEST in St. James' Palace, Father de la Colombière lived there in the quietest manner, a stranger to the excitements and tumults of the Court, knowing only those parts of the Palace through which he was obliged to pass to reach the apartments of the Duchess of York. His room overlooked the wide space in front of the building, yet never once did he gaze from the windows on what is one of the most beautiful views in London. He never visited the monuments or curiosities of the town, nor did he frequent any of the public walks, for he went out only to visit the sick or those to whom he hoped to be of service. Devoting himself entirely to God and the good of his neighbour, he never conversed with any except on religious topics."[1]

Every moment seemed to bring him fresh mortifications, but these he received joyfully. It was pardonable for foreigners, particularly for those newly arrived, to prefer their meat being served in the Continental fashion, for it frequently disagreed with them when dressed in the ordinary English way. But this was an indulgence Father de la Colombière would never permit himself. He always slept on a hard mattress, placed on rough planks,

[1] Notice by P. Nicolas de la Pesse.

and would take no precautions against the bitter cold. In addition to these daily privations, he practised many bodily penances, which served to keep alive his spirit of mortification. "The sum he received for his maintenance far exceeding his wants, he applied nearly the whole of it to the relief of the indigent, making a vow to devote it entirely to good works."

On three or four occasions he had the honour of conversing with the King of England, and was admitted to the Duchess' presence once a week; but to neither of them whilst speaking did he ever raise his eyes, and never even once looked at the Princess during the eighteen months in which he preached before her. It must have required marvellous self-command to have resisted the gratification of such innocent curiosity. By another vow he forbad himself ever to allow a word to escape his lips which might redound to his own praise or advantage. We may be astonished that he was thus able by a simple effort of will to curb the ordinary weaknesses of nature, but this kind of yoke he said gave him increased liberty to follow the leadings of grace; it was a system, however, of which he recommended the use but to few. To him, however, rules were a consolation seeming to speak to him with a Divine voice, and he observed them as faithfully as if inhabiting one of the houses of his Order.

Fully alive to the dangers of his position, he never omitted any precautionary measures which prudence might suggest. He adopted the ordinary garb of a layman, in accordance with the custom of the English Jesuits, and in one of his first letters

from this country warns his French correspondents to avoid anything that might be compromising in the address of their letters. "Do not," he says, "direct to me as 'Reverend Father,' for the opening of your letters by the post-office officials might cause me much annoyance; call me Father, if you please, in your letters. There is no danger in that, provided you are careful to avoid it in the address, for did some Protestant see the words, he would be likely to throw the letter into the river."

In taking these precautions, Father de la Colombière was acting more in obedience to his Superiors than from fear. He entirely abandoned himself to the protection of Providence, never seeming to regret his country. "I feared not but that I should find God in England," he wrote to his sister, "since it was He Himself Who sent me here." And in truth He had found Him Who sufficed and sustained His servant in the labours of his mission.

Our readers will be able to judge what was the extent of his work from his own description, written a month after his arrival in England, of the spiritual destitution for which he had to provide.

I am already as much accustomed to English life as if I had been born in London. I find a great many Catholics here, but am assured the number of devout persons amongst them is small. At this I am not surprised, for had we as little spiritual help in France as they have here, I think our state would be worse than theirs. No English subject is allowed to enter the Ambassador's chapel to hear Mass, and since my arrival men have been placed at the doors of all the chapels, even at those of the Queen's chapel, to arrest any Englishman who might be seen entering. There are indeed

many Frenchmen in the town, but it is now a year since they have received any instruction. We may well say that the Word of God is rarely heard in this country, and that he who comes to preach it is sure to be welcomed by many. The feast of All Saints is celebrated here ten days later than it is in France, and yesterday I therefore chose "Paradise" as the subject of my discourse.[1]

This sermon, preached on the 11th of November, is the second for the feast of All Saints. In it he speaks of Heaven, the city of the blessed, where there shall be no more sin, nor any of the sorrow sin entails, neither shall there be any limit to the happiness of the saints. The exordium of this discourse, addressed to the Duchess of York, whilst simple and beautiful in style, breathes the deepest piety in every line.

I am well aware, Madam, that in desiring me to ascend this pulpit, your Royal Highness had no other object in view than to procure for my hearers a means of sanctification; and I assure you, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, that in obeying your commands none other shall be my aim.

But however praiseworthy may have been the intentions of your Royal Highness, however determined I may be to second them, I could hope but for little result from my labours did I not possess for them the support of your example. Indifferent Christians may indeed, under all circumstances, find excuses for the neglect of their duties, but can they be indifferent to the example of a Princess who, in the very flower of her age, in a rank of life to which it is too often supposed everything is permissible, openly declares herself on the side of

[1] The English, in their hatred of Popery, had not then adopted the reformed Calendar. Since then they, with all the nations of Christendom, have done so, Russia excepted.

piety, and daily observes its practice with zealous exactness.

I will add, Madam, that before one who is herself irreproachable, I shall not be under the restraints which prudence so often dictates to those speaking in the presence of princes whose lives are not blameless. There is no vice which I shall not essay to combat, since there is none your own conduct does not condemn, and I shall be able to raise my voice, with whatever power God may inspire me, against the evils of our age, and no one will imagine my attacks directed against your Royal Highness. Thus, Madam, the Word of God will have free course in your presence, and there will be no occasion to gloss over before you the sinners' wounds which indeed will appear more hideous when contrasted with your purity.

The simple yet noble style of the preacher may be seen in this passage. His manner is grave, and, though simple, correct and dignified, the sentences well turned, and an apostolic eloquence animates the whole discourse. We are in the presence of one wholly given to God and the saving of souls for Him.

In the above address to the Duchess of York he had, as it were, announced his programme, which he carried out with scrupulous fidelity. His eulogy of the Duchess was indeed strictly true. That she was sincerely devout Father de la Colombière was in a position to judge, and he speaks of her as follows in a letter to one of the nuns of the Visitation :

The Duchess of York is a Princess of the deepest piety. She communicates weekly, and sometimes oftener, spending every day half an hour in mental prayer. Her

dream is to found a convent of your Order in Flanders for English girls.[1]

It was Father de la Colombière himself who had inspired her with this great admiration for the Daughters of the Visitation, springing from his own respect and devotion for St. Francis de Sales. From her pious director she also imbibed a special adoration for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and we shall find her in 1697 soliciting the Holy See for the institution of the feast of the Sacred Heart. The sermon from which we have quoted above was the first of a series preached on all Sundays and festivals, as also during two Lenten courses by Father de la Colombière in the Chapel Royal at St. James', which proved too small to contain the number of his hearers. Even Protestants braved the dangers of discovery and imprisonment to listen to these admirable discourses, of whose fruits we shall presently speak.

Undisturbed by the eulogiums called forth by his eloquence and piety, the saintly Father never lost his humility. It was not in vain that in his long retreat he had adopted for himself this motto: *Absit mihi vel gloriari vel lætari nisi in Cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi*—"Far be it from me

[1] The Duchess of York retained her affectionate esteem for the Order of the Visitation after she became Queen of England. In passing through France with her husband the King, in 1701, she paid four visits to the Convent of St. Mary at Moulins, when she held the Superior long in conversation. She gave a striking testimony of her attachment to this Order by choosing the Convent of Chaillot, near Paris, in which to make a religious retreat, "where in the practice of the severest virtue she gained for herself that crown which is the reward of holiness, and of which it was not in the power of man's injustice to deprive her."

either to glory, or to rejoice, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He received compliments with such icy coldness that few after a time dared address such unpalatable matter to him.

Little did it affect him whether his hearers admired his eloquence or not: his object was the saving of their souls at any price. The deplorable spiritual desolation of the English Catholics, the sight of these sheep without a shepherd, perishing for want of help, wrung his heart, and often did he bemoan their state before his God.

> If the Catholics of this country [he wrote] possessed but half the religious privileges which abound in France, there would be found amongst them many saints. But it is terrible to see the way they are persecuted, and the few helps to devotion they can obtain. Without spiritual instruction, and forbidden to hear Mass, can we wonder they are not more fervent. It is indeed a sadly desolate Church, and it seems to me that the prayers of the faithful could not be better employed than in supplicating the religious revival of this kingdom.

He entreats the prayers of the conventual establishments, and of the private persons to whom he writes, for the conversion of England, thus beginning that crusade of ceaseless supplication for this country of which we in our day reap the reward in the flourishing state of Catholicism in Great Britain.

Nor was the destitution of religious privileges the only cause of the low ebb to which piety had fallen, for the frightful corruption of manners contributed largely to this deplorable state of things. Public scandals and disorders were common, and

after ten months' residence in London, he thus writes to his brother Humbert:

In the midst of the general depravity which heresy has wrought in this town, I find amongst the inhabitants much fervour, nobility of character, and an abundant harvest ripe for the sickle and ready to the hand which God shall appoint to gather it. I serve a Princess pious in every sense of the word, gentle, amiable, and an example of all that is good. For myself, I am as little troubled by the excitements of the Court as if I were in a desert.

It required the greatest self-command to maintain a calm and peaceful heart in the midst of the religious and political struggles which were then so violently agitating the minds of men. He dwelt, however, in an atmosphere above the tumults of earth, and his energies found vent in a double field of action—his own heart and the exercise of his ministry. But he maintained this attitude at the expense of his strength, which was wearing rapidly, and after the Lent of 1677 he felt the first symptoms of that consuming malady of which he was the victim. This failure in his health he attributed to the effects of climate and severe work.

It is true [he writes] that my chest, which I had always looked on as my strong point, gives me some inconvenience, but it appears that many people in this country are troubled in the same way, from the pernicious use of stone coal, which is commonly burnt in the grates. I have, however, suffered from it but little as yet, and suspect that over-study is the more probable cause of the illness.

In these last words he hints at the true cause of

the failure in his health, namely, his sedentary occupations, his life of prayer, his arduous studies, and constant mortification of the flesh.

As he was anxious there should be no interruption in his ministerial work, he determined to devote his time to the preparation of his sermons for the ensuing year. He thought he should do well in saving himself more by giving up the plan of writing them out in full. "I shall not have to work so hard," he said; "shall have more time to devote to the souls whom God has placed under my charge, and it may be that the Lord will vouchsafe a double blessing on discourses in which human eloquence plays a minor part."

This arrangement doubtless afforded him some relief, but there yet remained a permanent cause of weakness in his laborious duties of the study and the confessional, and fatigue in his struggle to establish the supremacy of grace in his heart and in his apostolic grief at witnessing the triumphs of error. How grievous was the trial to live in a country where God in the Blessed Sacrament was exposed to every outrage, and where, to the great detriment and sorrow of the faithful, it was necessary to seek other veils for the Sacrament of the Altar than those in which it has pleased God voluntarily and ordinarily to shroud Himself. Truly could he say with the Apostle, *Quoniam tristitia mihi magna est et continuus dolor cordi meo*—"*I have great sorrow and continual sadness in my heart.*"[1] He strove to console himself by redoubling his own devotions, remaining as long as he possibly could at the foot of the altar. How

[1] Romans ix. 3.

would he have rejoiced to bring home to the Saviour that multitude of prodigal children and reveal to them the wonders and mercies of the adorable Heart? To such as confided to him the direction of their souls he failed not to inspire a love for this Devotion, nor could he restrain himself in the pulpit from speaking of the Heart of Jesus. On one occasion when preaching, he exclaimed, "What wilt Thou do, O Lord, to overcome this obstinate insensibility? The Fathers of the Church tell us that Thou hast exhausted Thyself in this mystery of love; if the sacred contact of Thy Body cannot break the spell which binds us to sin, what success can we hope for from any other remedy? I can see in such our evil plight but one resource. Give us, O my God, a new heart, pure and tender, neither of marble nor of bronze, a heart in all things like to Thine. Give us, in fine, O Jesus, Thine own Heart. Come, O sweet Heart of Jesus, to my breast, and there if it be possible light up a fire of love which shall burn with the ardent devotion I should pay to my Saviour and my God!

"Come, O Sacred Heart, and love that Blessed Saviour in me, even as Thou didst love me in Him. May I live only in Him and for Him, so that at the last I may live with Him for ever and ever."

Father de la Colombière lived indeed in intimate union with the Heart of Jesus. It was from that sanctuary of grace that he drew his power to touch the souls of men, and for himself the strength to attain unto perfection.

CHAPTER XI.

Progress in Perfection.

1677—1687.

MULTIFARIOUS as were the occupations of Father de la Colombière at this time, he never for a moment lost sight of the all-important work of his personal sanctification. It was from two principal sources that he drew the strength to maintain his spiritual vigour in climbing the high hill of Christian perfection. The first of these was the scrupulous observance of his Rule, to which he was as faithful in the Palace of St. James as in the house at Lyons. "The exact observance of Rule," he was accustomed to say, "is itself a source of benediction, in it consists my greatest treasure, and from it I derive such infinite good that did I find myself alone in a desert island, I should be content, deprived of all beside, were God to leave a faithful obedience to my Rule. O holy precepts and obligations, happy the soul who has learnt to observe and love you!" At another time he said:

How good God has been to give us rules for our daily conduct, and how blind are we when, departing from His law, we fancy we can find for ourselves a better! Believe me, our real happiness consists in the careful study and observance of His minutest precepts.

Undisciplined hearts, thinking to be a law unto themselves, find the commandments of God an unsupportable yoke, but to those who have tried it there is in the very act of obedience a hidden treasure, an abundance of peace, and, when the law of God is kept in love, liberty a thousand times sweeter than the hollow treasures of the world.

Father de la Colombière speaks on these points with so much warmth and earnestness that we are persuaded he had practised what he so strongly commended, and had an experimental knowledge of the happiness which the faithful observance of Rule and fulfilment of his vows brings to the mind of the Religious.

We have seen with what ardour he embraced the obligations of his Order. The sensitiveness of his conscience, and the purity of his soul, are our guarantee for the fidelity with which he kept them. The second source whence he obtained strength for his apostolic mission, and for that warfare of which sanctification is the aim, was his devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Happy in his consecration to that source of every grace, his love for It was of daily growth, as was also his anxiety that others should know and worship It. He himself was full of spiritual gifts, and stood amazed at the abundance of grace vouchsafed Him. He did not forget how wonderfully God had blessed his labours at Paray, and this remembrance was of infinite encouragement to him. During his retreat of 1677 he made a thorough examination and exposition of the state of his soul, and from the papers he has left we can distinctly trace the workings of the Spirit within

him at that time. He begins his diagnosis with the remark that his frame of mind is much altered from what it was in years past. Heretofore the prospect of being exposed to the temptations incident to an active life had filled him with alarm ; but now, this fear dispelled, he felt himself called on to labour without reserve for the sanctification of souls.

He recognized with gratitude that his thirst for human applause had greatly decreased. Worldly success had lost much of its attraction for him, and he finds himself far less affected than formerly by the praise and opinions of men. The fear of falling into such snares had hitherto opposed and silenced him, greatly interfering with his usefulness; but from these trials he now feels himself happily freed.

He relates a conversation which he had with a pious person on this subject. He gives no name but it is easy to see to whom he refers. This person told him that whilst she was in prayer on his behalf, our Lord had assured her that the soul of Father de la Colombière was peculiarly dear to Him, and an object of His special solicitude. "Alas," replied he, "how can such be the case, when I am conscious of being so miserable a sinner, ever seeking the applause of men, and full of human respect!" "O my Father," she exclaimed, "be assured the feelings of which you complain have not their origin in your breast." This answer consoled him, and dwelling less on the temptations, they became feebler and weaker in their attacks.

One of his greatest helps in the arduous work

around him lay in the remembrance of the words which Blessed Margaret Mary had written on his behalf at the moment of his quitting France. This is the document as it lies before us :

1. Father de la Colombière's particular gift is that of leading souls to God ; and seeing this, the devils will do their best to frustrate him. Some even in the cloister will be inimical to him, and misunderstand his teachings, but under these crosses the goodness of the Lord, which shall be in proportion to his faith, will be his sufficient stay.

2. For all sinners Father de la Colombière must have an infinite compassion, only resorting to severe measures when specially advised thereto by God.

3. Let him have a particular care not to accept of the good things of this world from his own source. This brief recommendation is pregnant with meaning, which God will discover to him as he is fit to receive it.

Without being able fully to interpret this epistle, enigmatical as is all relating to the future, Father de la Colombière kept it with assiduous care, and little by little as his life unrolled itself the value of its intimations was developed. To this he alludes in the journal kept during his retreat, and even more clearly still in a letter to Mother Saumaise, as follows :

London, February 7th, 1677.—You will be interested to learn that on looking at the note you put into my hands at parting, I found it contained a revelation in almost every word. It was, however, only after a retreat of ten days that its meaning was imparted to me. I can truly say that in it our Lord omitted nothing which I could require, indeed it contained a

remedy for every ill. All which was predicted in it has been accomplished, save the persecution alluded to in the first paragraph as about to come upon me through a person dedicated to God. As to those spoken of in the same passage with which the devil is to vex me, there are few with which I have not already been assaulted by him. The second and third articles were of the greatest value for my repose of mind and the sanctification of my soul. At first, and indeed for three months, I believed the advice they contained was of general application to the whole course of my life, but by degrees I perceived its special application to present events and its immediate use in frustrating certain intentions and plans which troubled me much and were clearly opposed to the Divine will. The last injunction, which I had never been able to understand, revealed itself to me all in a moment, and nothing could be clearer than it now seemed.

On the fifth day of his retreat the words, which may be literally rendered, "Let him have a particular care not to receive good from his own resources," were explained to mean that God asked of him the sacrifice of a pension he was in receipt of from his family, and which would apparently be of much use to him in the circumstances under which he was placed. A special vow had already applied this money so strictly to a particular object that he had been obliged to refuse to buy an English watch for his brother, not being, as he said, at liberty to dispose of anything he possessed in a way to gratify himself. And yet, notwithstanding this obligation, the very act of receiving a pension seemed to him in some degree out of keeping with the complete poverty he had sworn

to observe. It was now God's will that he should be stripped of all earthly goods, and the holy man, following the Divine inspiration, willingly abandoned his pension and thought himself happy to have been able to discern the teachings of the Spirit in this particular. "Time would fail me to tell all the treasures and riches I discovered in this memorandum," he writes. "All I can say is, that if this is the work of the evil one, he must be very blind to his own interests, since it has afforded me such great assistance against his attacks, that I can compare its effects to nought but the operations of the Divine Spirit."

On the sixth day of the retreat, meditating on the vow he had made faithfully to observe his Rule, he thanks God, Who had inspired him with this resolve, which he now renews with all the powers of his mind. On the last day a most holy confidence took possession of his soul, filling him with the most intense joy, and looking at Margaret Mary's words, and perceiving that the Lord therein promises to be his strength in proportion to his confidence, he exclaims, "Thou, O my God, wilt be my strength, my guide, my director; to me Thou wilt give counsel, patience, knowledge, peace, wisdom, prudence. To Thee shall I fly in temptation, in weakness, in sorrow, in vexations, in alarms, or rather henceforth I shall no more fear either the assaults of the devil, my own weakness, or even my own self-confidence. Thou, my God, hast promised to be my strength in proportion to my trust in Thee; how great then is Thy goodness, Who in view of this condition dost increase my faith!" As the result of this

retreat, he obtained greater zeal and power of self-sacrifice; his love for Jesus, his chief and model, was strengthened, he vows to adore the Blessed Eucharist with an ever-increasing devotion, and to promote with all his powers the veneration of the Sacred Heart.

He then gives in detail the memorable revelation Sister Margaret Mary communicated to him at Paray, which our readers will not have forgotten, and concludes the retreat by an unreserved surrender to the Heart of Jesus of his whole being and of all the acts of virtue and good works which may be his till the day of his death.

O holy Heart of Jesus [he cries], give me complete forgetfulness of self, since without that I cannot attain to Thee, and as for the future I would have all my words and deeds to be Thine, prevent me from such as are unworthy of Thee. Teach me how to acquire that purity of heart for which Thou hast given me so great a longing. My heart burns with desire to serve Thee, but it is not possible for me to do so without such light and help as I can obtain from Thee alone. Fulfil Thy will, O Lord, in me. That my will is often in opposition to Thine, I know only too well; but at least this opposition is hateful to me. Thou, my beloved Lord, canst do all things. If I become a saint, to Thee be all the praise. It is as clear to me as the day that, my sanctification being Thy work, to Thee alone can be all the praise, and for that end alone do I desire it. Amen.

And thus it came to pass that that entire devotion of himself to God which for so long had seemed to him beyond his powers, now appeared to be within his reach. He began to discern wherein consists the perfection of a soul dedicated

to God, and a hope that, with the assistance of Divine grace, he might some day attain thereto, dawned upon his heart. He began to feel the liberty which the weakening of the bands of sin confers on the devout soul, and to know how preferable is the service of the King of kings to that of any of the princes of the earth, and again we find him renewing his vow to labour in the service of the Sacred Heart.

Father de la Colombière had made at this period striking progress in the ways of holiness. The feelings and resolutions which accompanied this retreat were far in advance of those he had experienced on previous occasions. He had been haunted by fears lest his strength should not suffice for the long continued struggle of the spirit against the flesh, and harassed by the increasing vigilance necessary to resist the attacks of vain-glory to which he was subject. To live in the midst of worldly surroundings, a prey to many diverse influences, had appeared to him incompatible with a recollected frame of mind, and oppressed by such thoughts, he had despairingly exclaimed, "O life, how can I endure thee!" But now this phase of depression is past. The Lord Jesus had made this heart, so freely given to Him, to overflow with Divine love, and at the same time had strengthened it against the seductions of self. Thanks to the teachings which God, through the mouth of His faithful servant, had given him, Father de la Colombière had sought in the Heart of Jesus strength which had raised him above the weaknesses of the flesh, and now, freed from former fears and casting aside pusillanimous doubts,

he presses courageously forward in the path of duty.

May those followers of the Apostle who, like Father de la Colombière, labour for the salvation of souls, learn from him that if they would succeed in the great work before them, they must begin by enthroning the Lord Jesus without a rival in their own hearts! Then will they have part in the glorious riches of the Divine Heart, and bring many others under Its sweet and holy influence.

From henceforth Father de la Colombière is ready to undertake and suffer all for the glory of God. To the most active zeal he unites the recollectedness of a soul to whom its Master is always present. Blessed Margaret Mary ceases not to pray for him and to send him the inspired counsels wherein he found special guidance for his conduct at this time. For as we have seen, the prophetic note he received on leaving France, not only foretold his future, but instructed him how to meet it. Father de la Colombière had been warned to expect persecution from a certain person dedicated to the service of God, and in truth certain criticisms which were propagated at this time hostile to his preaching, were a great trial to him. Had he given cause for this attack? We are sure he had not, for we are in possession of all the sermons he preached in England, and in matters of doctrine they are irreproachable.

Having so often profited by Blessed Margaret Mary's advice, he failed not at this trying time to beg from her fresh instructions, through the medium of her Superior.

The 20th of November he writes from London:

The Enfants de Marie are not to be met with here, much less the disciples of Sister Alacoque. But God is amongst us in all places, and to those who seek Him He is not less accessible in London than at Paray. I render Him my humble thanks for keeping me in the remembrance of that holy nun, to whose prayers I doubt not my being indebted for much grace. I shall endeavour to make good use of the advice you send, above all of that which you tell me was communicated to you in your last retreat.

London, May 3rd, 1677.—I rejoice with Sister Alacoque in the sacrifice she has been able to make to our Lord, and at the signal blessings with which He has marked its acceptance. I think I completely understand her last note, with the exception of the final expression, "without reserve," words of such vast dimensions that I greatly fear my powers may not be equal to their demands.

London, November 25th, 1677.—Sister Alacoque's letter has much encouraged me, and set at rest a thousand misgivings which have lately assaulted me. As to her request, I am greatly troubled about it, and know not what answer to make. I am not inspired of God as she is, and find it difficult to advise her. However, to content her humility, I will endeavour to write to her to-day. What refreshing news you give me of that dear Sister! how good is God in all His saints! I scarcely know how to sympathize with her in her sorrow, for indeed the corrections that come to us from God seem to me a thousand times sweeter than caresses received from man.

London, April 30th, 1678.—I very cordially thank you for Sister Alacoque's letter. I will write her an answer, which if you think well you can give her, or do otherwise as you shall judge best. I am greatly edified by what she writes me, and so convinced of the

truth of the revelations she receives, both as to things past and present, that I can no longer call them matters of faith.

London, May 9th, 1678.—According to the advice of Sister Alacoque, I place the result of my labours in the hands of God, Who will give me such success as He pleases. She has sent me two or three instructions which are the rules and happiness of my life. Blessed be God, Who deigns to enlighten us poor benighted ones through the instrumentality of those to whom He is revealed.

London.—Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to reply to our holy Sister Alacoque's really valuable letter; but I feel myself most incapable of instructing her, and so greatly fear breaking in upon her meditations, that I dare not follow my inclinations in this matter. To me she seems so truly taught and enlightened from above, that I feel convinced God reveals Himself to her in some special manner. She speaks of the fresh sacrifice our Lord has asked in demanding of her a care of her bodily health. This is, I believe, a sacrifice more acceptable to God than many prayers, in that it entails a greater humility.

London, June 27th, 1678.—Sister Alacoque's letter has filled me with confusion, but no words can express how opportune was its arrival. Had my heart been laid open before her, she could not have written more to the point. I know not well how to answer her, but pray the Lord to inspire me.

The above quotations initiate us in the relations existing between these holy souls, and the mutual esteem in which each was held by the other. These letters give the truest picture of Father de la Colombière. In them are pourtrayed his humility, his self-distrust, his aptitude for attaining the

highest good, and his devout appreciation of the virtues and inspirations of the Blessed Margaret Mary. She, on her part, ceased not to crave the guidance of him whom God had appointed her director, and from what we now know of his character we may form some idea of the wisdom, prudence, and supernatural discernment with which he watched over his spiritual daughter.

In the following pages we shall see him earnestly devoting himself to yet more arduous labours, and endowed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the most wonderful success of his apostolate.

CHAPTER XII.

Apostolic Labours in London.

1677—1678.

THE sight of the afflictions endured by the Church in England, and of those who, deprived of religious privileges, firmly adhered to their faith and grew in piety and holiness, excited the compassion and redoubled the zeal of Father de la Colombière.

He found in London [says a contemporary writer] abundant opportunity for the practice of those virtues to whose exercise he had devoted his life, and the yearning which possessed him to have his part in the trials of the English Catholics, was but a fresh incentive to labour on their behalf. He who in time to come shall write the life of Father de la Colombière will find no lack of stirring incidents with which to furnish his narrative, should he but enumerate the wonders effected by his piety and courage, whether in the restoration of apostates to the fold, in the making of converts amongst the highest ranks of English society, or in the rescue of sinners from the hold of the evil one. His extraordinary labours, the success of his mission, and the whole history of his apostolic career, will indeed supply his future biographer with ample materials.

Unhappily this memoir was not undertaken at the time when recent documents and yet living witnesses might easily have been consulted, but the

words of the contemporary writer, above quoted, will show how multifarious were the labours of the great Father Claude de la Colombière.

We will, however, endeavour to give our readers some slight insight into his life during the two years of his residence in England. With this object we shall consult his private correspondence, in which, notwithstanding his modest reticence, we shall find some interesting details of his work.

I have many undertakings in hand [he writes], all of which have for their object the conversion or sanctification of souls. I feel within me a growing zeal to labour for those aspiring towards perfection, and to inspire others with a like ambition.

There is at this Court a young widow of from seven to eight-and-twenty years of age, who in the midst of the almost universal corruption of manners has preserved her reputation unblemished, though exposed by her wit and beauty to many temptations. This lady, who is of the highest rank, never fails to attend my sermons, nor is she ashamed to allow the emotions they awaken in her to be seen. She often feels drawn to give herself to God—indeed, at times, to leave all and follow Him. But she is the centre of a brilliant circle, and cannot yet determine absolutely to renounce the world and its allurements. She is of a most amiable disposition. I speak to her very urgently on these matters, and she always listens with the utmost deference to my exhortations, but as yet I have been unable to induce her to take any decided step. She admires the religious life extremely in the abstract, but fears to encounter the sacrifices which embracing it entails. My visits to her are great acts of self-denial on my part, but I shall continue them, since under similar circumstances God has blessed my perseverance to the benefit of souls.

My only fear is that I may be giving time to this case which might be better employed elsewhere. Could this lady be persuaded to give herself to God, her example would be of great weight. She is the most highly gifted woman, both in mind and person, at the Court. I beg you to remember this subject in your prayers.

I have good hope [he says in a letter] that after Easter I may see the lady, on whose behalf I have been so anxious, treading the narrow way. During my last conversation with her at her house, she wept bitterly at the resistance of her will to the will of God, assuring me that the vanity and vexation of the world and the value of religion had never, she believed, been more clearly revealed to any one than herself. Hers is indeed a finely-tempered soul united to a person of great external advantages; her example would make a forcible impression on many.

This lady, whose indecision and lack of courage failed to exhaust the charity of Father de la Colombière, at length responded to his pious appeals, and after being for so long the object of Divine solicitude, at length submitted herself to its guidance.

Yesterday evening I was again with the lady of whom I spoke to you. Strangely enough, the devil employs to her hurt a certain false respect to the Body of our Lord, which so deters her from Holy Communion that it is the one thing she dreads in the religious life. On my requiring of her to receive the Blessed Sacrament at least once a fortnight for three months, her distress was so great that I quite felt for her. She implored me to believe that nothing I could ask would be as painful to her as this request. However, I held my ground,

and she eventually promised obedience. Most earnestly do I recommend her to your prayers.

I know not how it is that she has not already given herself to God. It must be that she is the prey of delusions, for I find in her no attachment to the world. The devils dread her complete surrender to Heaven. It is the evil spirit alone within her who resists the influence of grace. I can trace no opposition springing from herself.

I have the happiness of seeing the Duchess of ——,[1] of whom I have spoken to you so often in my letters, completely converted. The Lord visited her lately in a short but severe illness of four-and-twenty hours, during which she was seized with so poignant a regret at not having already given herself to Him that it nearly killed her.

Since then she begged me to call at her house that I may speak to her in private, and I hope this very day to see her begin a new life to the glory of God. She has in her the making of a saint, and my poor advice fell in this instance on rich soil.

There was yet another lady of rank who owed her conversion to the zeal of Father de la Colombière, one whom a providential circumstance had placed under his spiritual guidance. If he had reason to complain of the backwardness of the former lady in Divine things, he had no cause to do so on the present occasion. The work was effected in a single conversation. She entered on the Christian course without hesitation, and her progress was in proportion to her ardour. At its outset her path was bestrewed by God with many

[1] After some little research we have arrived at the conclusion that this lady was the Duchess of Hamilton, or perhaps Mary Stuart, Duchess of Richmond.

consolations, and, inspired by Him, she renounced the things of the world, debarring herself from the possibility of return to them. Later she was bitterly assaulted, the devil did his utmost to shake her courage, but the God in Whom she trusted sent His servant to sustain and comfort her.

Like St. Francis de Sales, Father de la Colombière had a particular gift for arousing a love of piety in those of the upper classes and amongst people of the highest rank, his ambition being to lead souls to whatever height of sanctification it might please God to call them. With admirable tact he effectively seconded the operations of grace, and strongly urged the adoption of the religious life on such as aspired to perfection. Thus were laid the foundations of many vocations.

There resided in London at that time a young widow, aged about thirty, of a courageous and devoted heart, but weak in health and devoid of means. For more than a year she had felt a strong inclination to retire from the world and lead a life of solitude and penitence. This lady, when Father de la Colombière repeatedly refused his consent to her wishes, urged on him the constancy and ardour of her desire, and entreated him to beware lest in denying her request he might be opposing the workings of the Holy Spirit. Father de la Colombière endeavoured to convince her that her wishes were impracticable, but finding her resolution unshaken by his arguments, he determined to prove her, and thus discover whether her sole desire was to dedicate herself to God. He therefore suggested that she should make

application to some French convent to receive her as a servant, and employ her to look after the sheep, or in any other menial occupation, and this as some of the saints had done before her, without making herself known.

This proposal, which he made with a view to testing her sincerity, she accepted with the greatest joy, and begged his assistance in carrying out the plan. We may read, in one of his private letters, Father de la Colombière's description of this person :

> She was by birth a Frenchwoman, and during the year and a half that I have known her has always implicitly followed my advice, seeking to mortify her passions, to modify the too great vivacity of her character, and showing a perseverance in well-doing which many difficulties have not been able to subdue.

He begs the Superioress to whom he is writing to advise him on this occasion, adding : "Think you it may be possible that the Lord is going to raise up among us in these days some great virtues, such as edified the world in the first ages of the Church?" This lady's case was indeed full of promise. She left London in July, 1678, crossed France, reached Paray, and was there received, as it had been arranged, by the Ursuline nuns in a menial capacity.

In the letter to Mère de Saumaise, then at Moulins, of which she was the bearer, Father de la Colombière says :

> Should it seem well to you to detain her on the road, I have told her to put herself entirely under your direction. You may be perhaps surprised at the

seeming haste with which I have conducted this affair, but after the precautions which, following your advice, I have taken in the matter, I have no fears as to its results.

He goes on to speak in praise of this devoted Christian woman, who had resolved to suffer all things rather than be unfaithful to her vocation, seeing in her acceptance of past trials the surest augury of her future perseverance. She had gone through very severe domestic afflictions, had made without shrinking all the sacrifices Father de la Colombière demanded of her, and had carried out the arduous task of self-mortification with wondrous resolution. We shall see later in this history how unmistakably her call was of God.

Another remarkable vocation was that of a young London tradesman, twenty-four years of age, who one day called on Father de la Colombière to ask his advice as to carrying out a longing he had for some time felt to leave his native land, and, being young and strong, to lead a life of austerity on some foreign shore, begging his bread. Father de la Colombière, wishing to know somewhat of him before giving a definite opinion on such a proposal, recommended his doing nothing hastily in the matter. In the meantime, to prove his docility, he gave him some rules of life, in following which the young man conceived so great a love for obedience, that henceforth he submitted himself entirely to the guidance of his spiritual Father. He abandoned his original design, and under the advice of his director, devoted himself at home to advancing his progress in holiness. God, Who is always generous to the

generous, bestowed on him a wonderful gift of prayer, in which he daily received such deep and remarkable teaching in the ways of holiness that Father Claude de la Colombière was filled thereat with the profoundest joy and admiration. In after years this young man became a monk of distinguished piety. The good priest had also his work by the bedside of the dying, and we may well say, happy were they who passed from earth supported by the words which fell from his lips. Even his very presence seemed to inspire them with the happiest dispositions. He himself relates the following incident, of which he was an eye-witness.

A man at the point of death hearing around him the sobs of those who could not restrain their tears, looked at them sadly and reproachfully for their want of courage and of faith, and gravely said: "Are there then here none who love me well enough to rejoice in my joy? Why should we weep," he added, pointing to the sky, "since it is thither we are going?" Others amongst his dying penitents entreated their friends not to pray to God for the restoration of their health, or the prolongation of their lives, so anxious were they to depart and to be with Him.

Some who came back as it were by a miracle from the gates of death could not refrain from weeping that the day of their release was yet delayed. They had learnt from Father de la Colombière to place all their treasure where already were fixed the desires and affections of their hearts.

The servant of God had the consolation of seeing his labours crowned with that success which is the desire of all saints, namely, the conversion of men.

To him it was given to turn sinners from the error of their ways, to discover those chosen souls who had nothing to refuse their Lord, with whom, as he expressed it, he could do what and all he would, and who without looking to the right hand or the left followed his counsels, and soon rose with ever increasing powers to the very heights of Christian perfection.

In enumerating the spiritual children of Father de la Colombière we must not omit to mention the Duchess of York. Mary Beatrice had accepted him as the director of her conscience, and came every eight days to receive his counsels and exhortations.

To her his support and guidance were of the greatest necessity. Her elevated and brilliant position was beset with troubles and difficulties. She was no stranger to the tortures of jealousy ; her first-born children had been taken from her by death, and in this calamity she could not but see the chastisement of Heaven for a concession made to public expediency by which they had been baptized in the religion of the State. Great pressure was brought to bear on her to enforce her reception of certain persons agreeable to the King.[1] The petty persecutions, of which the Catholics were the object, added to her discomforts, and the young princess was early initiated in the practice of that self-sacrifice, patience, and gentleness, of which she was hereafter to be so admirable a model. From her wise director she learnt to gather strength and consolation in the practices of her holy faith, and the courage and prudence of

[1] As the Duchess of Portsmouth.

conduct which excited the admiration even of her enemies. Burnet, the most prejudiced of the writers attached to the party of the Prince of Orange, says, in describing the character of Mary Beatrice : " Her discretion was remarkable, she was affable in her comportment, and her life was so virtuous and innocent that it won for her the esteem and affection of the public."[1]

A gentle purity, or, as this writer calls it, innocence, appeared in every line of her noble and beautiful countenance, her soul was continually in the attitude of resignation with which she met her great misfortunes. The justness of her judgment, the strength of her courage, and the invariable sweetness and dignity of her demeanour were unshaken during the sad years of her long exile. Louis XIV., after a visit to her little Court at St. Germain, remarked to his courtiers : " She has the true bearing of a queen," he might well have added, of a Christian.[2] In her thirty years of banishment the trials of Mary Beatrice were many, but, even in those which affected her most nearly, she never faltered, and such was her attachment to the faith, that she would have seen her son dead at her feet rather than that he should wear a crown at the price of apostasy. History can but honour the memory of such a princess. Father de la

[1] It is true that far from speaking of her purity of demeanour as the effect of religious principles, he attributed it to hypocrisy and knowledge of the world, an impossible combination in so young and demonstrative a princess. Burnet takes no pains to prove his base surmises, being only anxious to calumniate his victim.

[2] See Miss Strickland's *Life of Mary Beatrice*. The authoress, though a Protestant, estimates her character with considerable fairness.

Colombière was truly justified in the praise with which he speaks of her in his correspondence, and in the attachment and affection which he showed for this pure and courageous woman.

He had often remarked that the most satisfactory characters with which he had to deal were those which united a sound judgment to an energetic nature. In such the grace of God finds the most abundant hope of action. There were many such loyal natures amongst the English hard-working people, who received the Divine seed into a rich and fruitful soil. Abjurations multiplied at the preaching of the zealous missionary. No one could hear him speak or converse without being struck by his sanctity; sight and truth entered the darkened heart, and the sinner owned himself vanquished.

One day he writes: "I have actually five persons coming to see me with the intention of abjuring Protestantism, two were formerly monks, two are young French ladies, the other is an Englishman." In another letter he writes: "I have just received the submission of a young lady who has for long resisted the Divine call: pray God for her. Only eight days since I received another heretic." London at that time contained a really numerous body of apostates, whom ambition, the love of wealth, and yet oftener the allurements of the world, had separated from the Catholic Church. Father de la Colombière doubtless observed all those precautions which prudence would suggest, to acquaint himself with the state of mind of these deserters from the faith. Many were persons without stability or any strength of mind, a prey to

the feelings of the moment, of whom it was to be feared that the very inconstancy which prevented their remaining in the ranks of heresy might at some other time and under other influences incline them again to forsake the standard of the Church. It was easy to predict that he would suffer, as all engaged in the work of conversion suffer. Father de la Colombière had the sorrow of seeing three or four unhappy apostates, whom, grossly deceived, he had re-admitted to the fold of the Church, fall back into heresy. When warned to beware of these kind of people, so ready to take advantage of his compassion and charity, he replied: "If they deceive me, I lose my money, that is all; if they are sincere, I shall have gained souls for Christ;" and, in the goodness of his heart, he never even after these disappointments was less ready to extend a helping hand to these unfortunates. So many indeed were the conversions made by him to the Catholic faith, that later they formed a source of complaint against him, and with regret we add that his accuser and betrayer was one of those apostates whom his charity had befriended.

Amongst the sermons of Father de la Colombière are two which were preached on the occasion of a double abjuration. The first is thus headed in all editions: *Preached on the occasion of the reception of a Calvinistic gentleman of quality.* Who was that convert? History has as yet furnished us with no clue to his name.[1]

[1] If we may hazard a conjecture this nobleman was Lord Castlemaine, whom Titus Oates accused of being a Jesuit priest, and who was sent to the Tower. The other person of quality may have been Lady Clifford or Lady Abingdon, whose husbands had been converted a short time previously.

The second sermon was delivered on the occasion of the abjuration of Calvinism by a person of rank with all his family. Here again we deplore the absence of contemporary documents, and know not to whom allusion is here made.

It was on one of these occasions that Father de la Colombière in a moment of oratorical fervour exclaimed:

O England! unhappy England! thou art an example of the truth of the saying, "The abuse of grace leadeth to obduracy." For upon what country in days of yore did Heaven more abundantly shower its benedictions, to what people was ever given greater zeal for the faith, deeper reverence for the Church? Amongst the great kings who have governed thee, many abandoned their crowns for the love of Jesus. Canst thou tell the number of thy princes and princesses who have set thee an example of evangelical poverty and chastity? Some amongst them I find who have carried these virtues even into the married state. Thy cities have brought forth martyrs, thy churches Pontiffs of extraordinary piety. The numbers of thy Religious nearly equalled the rest of thy population; thou wert, so to say, one large monastery, so eager were thy inhabitants, some to give their goods to religious foundations, others to pass their days within the cloister! I will not dwell on the honours received by the Mother of God at the hands of Englishmen in other days, nor speak of their devotion to the Queen of Angels, so great, that England, in those days, was called the portion or dowry of Mary. It is well known [he continues] that thou wast the first to raise the standard of the Immaculate Conception, that to thee was given by the Queen of Heaven that miraculous scapular venerated by all Christians, the hope and defence of such as have the privilege of wearing it. Well may I say of

thee, England, that the ocean was powerless to set a limit to thy faith, which spread itself beyond the seas. The kingdoms, which the zeal of thy children have given to the Catholic Church, rise up and call thee blessed who wert their mother in Jesus Christ.

By none will the profound attachment of Father de la Colombière to the great English nation be denied. He describes in eloquent terms the Catholic centuries of her history, and those who have read the celebrated work of an illustrious member of the French Academy, *Les Moines d'Occident*, will acknowledge that these eulogistic passages of the Jesuit orator do not exaggerate the facts. But the exaltation of the past was but a portion of his theme. It remained for him to treat, and that in the religious and only true point of view, the causes of the national decay. He thus continues :

The diminution of religious zeal had its origin in the natural weakness and infirmity of man. The nation was gradually corrupted by the wealth of its trade with countries abounding in gold and silver, by avarice and luxury. Could the decline of their faith, their enervation and voluptuous style of living, fail to provoke the anger of the Lord? And can we mistake the terrible effects of His wrath, in the thick darkness of doubt which enshrouds the land, the shock of rival creeds, the wide-spread diversities of belief, of feeling, of opinion, which sow enmity between town and town, between village and village, between members of the same family; in that multitude of sects, each reviling the other, wherein doubt is for ever triumphant, confidence altogether wanting, most men have little religion, and many none? I make no personal accusation, but if there be but one road to

Heaven, it is clear that under a system, in which each seeks a path for himself, many will go astray to their eternal loss. My God, when will Thy justice be satisfied, when will Thy avenging hand be stayed? Can it be that Thou shouldst look unmoved on so many perishing souls! Show us how we may turn Thine anger aside, and once again be re-united in the fold wherein for thirteen or fourteen centuries we dwelt in the light of Thy countenance!

As we read these thrilling words, the ardour which consumed his apostolic soul enters our own. How willingly would he have given his life for this people, which had become so dear to him! How fervently did he commend them to the merciful Heart of Jesus! How great was his joy at receiving into the fold any sheep which had been wandering in the mazes of Anglicanism!

We must not here omit to notice another of the results of his mission, namely, the very numerous religious vocations which his ministry developed. He, indeed, established in London a house in which many ladies, both unmarried and widows, resided, who, without wearing the habit, observed all the practices of religious life. Those who preferred living in France were received into the convent at Boulogne-sur-Mer, expressly founded for the English, and other monasteries on the Continent, particularly those of Ghent and Dunkirk, extended a generous hospitality to these voluntary exiles.

We have spoken of the kindness shown by Father de la Colombière to Sister Mary, that courageous *incognita* who became a humble lay-sister in the Ursuline Convent of Paray. We find,

in the course of his correspondence, allusion to another similar case, of an English lady, daughter of the Queen's surgeon, educated in France, and left a widow at the age of thirty, who was anxious to become a Religious of the Visitation in some convent on the Continent. She wished her little daughter, nine years of age, to be received as a pupil under the same roof, that she also might eventually become a nun, if it pleased God to give her a vocation. Father de la Colombière entered with paternal interest into all these details, and on his return to France was not unmindful of his *protégées.*

The facts we have cited will suffice to show the nature of the work wherein Father de la Colombière was engaged, but by no means to convey the extent of his labours. Let him speak on the subject himself.

After what I told you in my last letter, you will be surprised to hear that I never felt better than I do at present, never worked harder, nor, thanks to the goodness of God, were my labours ever crowned with greater success, or my hopes of the future brighter. The Lord blesses my poor labours with marvellous results.

Every day I see the wondrous effects of the grace of God in the hearts of many, and feel convinced that were I, their teacher, more advanced in holiness, their progress in sanctification would be less slow. My chief consolations are in certain souls, to whom a great yearning after perfection has been given. I pray you bless God for such; for He Who is so good to all, is doubly to be praised in them. I could fill a volume with the history of the workings of Divine Love in the hearts of men I have known since I have been here.

We celebrated the feast of the Visitation with all the ceremonial our circumstances permitted, and amongst the many who communicated on that day were two young ladies, about twenty years of age, who chose that festival on which to dedicate themselves to God by a vow of chastity. Two young widows were anxious to bind themselves in a like manner, but I bade them wait until the Assumption. Every day God sends me chosen souls desirous with the utmost courage to devote themselves to Him. I have just been speaking to three or four who are thinking of the religious life, and not long since two others came, who are, I believe, almost equally anxious to embrace that state. I foresee the beginning of a great work for God. My part in all this is small, and I remark that the Lord often sends me, after two or three months' delay, persons of whom I had entertained little hope. I beg your prayers, for it may please Him to aid me in answer to them, and thus the work will not be hindered by reason of my sins. [The servant of God repeats again and again in his correspondence his confidence in the future, saying,] I have the highest hopes for the advance of this good cause in times to come.

To this testimony of one little inclined to expect great things where he was himself engaged, let us add that of Blessed Margaret Mary. Inspired by the Spirit Who had so wonderfully revealed Himself to her, she celebrates in the litanies she composed the apostolic labours of the venerable Father, calling him the Apostle of Sinners, in that he brought heretics to a true conversion, the Shield of the Faith, the Destroyer of Unbelief, the Preacher of Penitence, the Saint whose words and example drew so many into the way of salvation.

Father de la Colombière was a worthy labourer and successful reaper in the harvest of the Lord,

the full extent of whose labours we shall never know, but something would have been wanting to a life so full of devotion and self-sacrifice had he not suffered in the cause of Christ.

Nature could not long sustain the great strain he put upon her powers. He had felt himself failing after the first Lenten station, preached in the Chapel Royal, and on the eve of the Assumption in the same year a dangerous spitting of blood manifested itself. It was, however, hoped that complete repose and a cessation from all work might gradually restore his strength. He writes:

> The permission of my Superiors having been obtained I was on the point of making the journey to France, to which I was greatly urged by my friends, when a fresh loss of blood from the lungs brought me to the verge of the grave. Now the doctors forbid my moving, saying I am not strong enough to travel and am more likely to get well here. I know not what the Lord may have in store for me, whether I am to live or die, to remain or to return, to preach or to be silent. I have scarcely strength enough either to write or speak, barely to pray. I see around me a whitening harvest, never has there seemed to me so rich a promise of souls, but I am powerless. God's will be done. I am unworthy to serve Him.

Father de la Colombière's health, however, improved, and this alarming attack, which had threatened to be fatal, passed off, leaving him, if not quite restored, at any rate sufficiently well to resume his labours. To these physical ills were joined others of a mental nature, infinitely more grievous to him. Our Lord revealed at that

time to Blessed Margaret Mary the griefs and internal trials which Father de la Colombière was suffering in England, and He Who, in spiritually uniting these two souls so devoted to Himself, had designed to convey to them succour and enlightenment proportionate to their wants, communicated to Blessed Margaret Mary a short instruction, which she was, through her Superior, to convey to the holy priest.

Mère de la Saumaise receiving, whilst still in possession of this note, the most pressing entreaties from Father de la Colombière for her prayers, determined to forward it, but in copying made a slight alteration. She was immediately warned by Blessed Margaret Mary that the Lord would not have it sent but as He had dictated, and indeed the words she had substituted were of much less force than those of the original.

This note contained much that was of the greatest comfort to the Reverend Father. In acknowledging its receipt, he remarks how timely had been its arrival, and that without its aid he should indeed have been in great mental straits. Truly God did not leave His faithful servant unassisted. "It is marvellous," writes Father de la Colombière, "to note how many good things, both spiritual and temporal, have come to me through my illness. I can never sufficiently praise the wisdom and goodness of God, Who brings His designs to completion by means which appear impossible to men. Never have I been so full of joy, never struck by the goodness of God as when I have felt myself in any real danger."

He had been obliged to diminish the extent

of his labours, but God, recognizing the faithfulness of His servant, gave to the little he was able to do a marvellous success, and Father de la Colombière, seeing the happy results and abundant fruits produced by such feeble means, was more and more convinced that the sanctification of souls is not in the labour of the husbandman, but in the blessing of God on that labour. He was able to preach the Lent of 1678, but on Easter Sunday began again to spit blood, and continued to do so for three days. He tells us it was his belief that he had made so bad a use of his health, as to oblige God to send him a return of the symptoms which had already more than once brought him near to death. Again he to a great extent recovered, but his chest, weakened by these repeated attacks, soon failed beneath the efforts of his zeal, and it seemed doubtful whether he would be able to continue his preaching in the Chapel of St. James. He therefore expected in the month of September to receive permission to return to France. But a letter from Blessed Margaret Mary instructed him that the Lord destined him for further labours. "What makes me think I shall yet be here for some time," he writes on the 19th of September, 1678, "is that fresh harvests present themselves to be gathered, and that Sister Alacoque prepares me for a continuation of my work. I received your letter and the paper you transmitted me from her the very day on which I had seen the doctor, and was feeling so weak and low that I seemed to have little strength for the work I foresee in the coming year, and looked upon my illness as an interposi-

tion of Providence, Who seeing my incapacity for the task, was about to withdraw me from this country. For this I was prepared, but having read your note, exhorting me not to lose courage for the difficulties before me, and to remember that he is all powerful who trusts in God, I began to think otherwise, and to believe that I shall yet remain here."

That he should endure yet greater trials was indeed the will of God. A bitter persecution of the Catholics was about to arise, of which he was to be one of the most notable victims.

CHAPTER XIII.

Arrest and Committal.

1678.

WARNED by his spiritual daughter of the approach of persecution, Father de la Colombière awaited without fear the trials with which he was threatened. Well for him that he had learnt to rejoice at the prospect of calumny, imprisonment, and sufferings in the cause of Jesus, for the moment was approaching when the cup of bitterness should be presented to his lips: *Fac me cruce inebriari.*

It not having been thought well by his Superiors that any change should be made in his appointment, he still held his perilous post at St. James' Palace, when, in the autumn of the year 1678, a storm of persecution burst over the Catholics, whose details history has preserved to us.

We have already alluded to the existence in England of a party, in whose eyes all measures were justifiable having for their end the banishment of the true faith from this country, and the exclusion of the Duke of York from the succession. For these men, blinded by passion, no accusations were too absurd, no slanders too preposterous, and knowing how credulous are the masses, and that

the mob will blindly follow all who caress and feed its passions, they felt they could venture far in calumniating the Papists without fear of detection.

That the people of London never exhibited a weaker credulity than on this occasion, our readers will perceive when we mention some of the allegations made against the Catholics.

It was declared that the pious Pontiff, Innocent XI., wishing to gain possession of the English throne, had charged Father Oliva, General of the Jesuits, to organize a vast conspiracy (including amongst its members Louis XIV., Père de la Chaise, the Catholic nobility of England, and Father Whitbread, Provincial of the Jesuits), having for its object the assassination of Charles II., the extinction of Protestantism in the blood of its adherents, and the re-establishment of the Catholic faith.

This odious Plot was said to be chiefly the work of the Jesuits, always foremost in aught that should be for the downfall of the Established Church. The Duke and Duchess of York, and the Queen herself, were suspected of complicity in an enterprize the thought of which could not but fill every Protestant with alarm.

The denunciator of the Plot was a certain Titus Oates, whose name, for a moment a popular rallying cry throughout Great Britain, has since been covered with opprobrium, and rightly classed amongst the most infamous in history. All writers, Hume, Lingard, Fox, Macaulay, Catholic and Protestant, unite in his condemnation, and in that of those who allowed themselves to become parties to so gross and cowardly an imposture.

Titus Oates [says Macaulay] had constructed a hideous romance, resembling rather the dream of a sick man, than any transaction which ever took place in the real world. The vulgar believed, and the highest magistrates pretended to believe, even such fictions as these. The chief judges of the realm were corrupt, cruel, and timid. The leaders of the country party encouraged the prevailing delusion. The most respectable among them, indeed, were themselves so far deluded as to believe the greater part of the evidence of the plot to be true. Such men as Shaftesbury and Buckingham doubtless perceived that the whole was a romance. But it was a romance which served their turn, and to their seared consciences the death of an innocent man gave no more uneasiness than the death of a partridge.[1]

The ambitious Shaftesbury in the House of Lords, Russell in the Commons, and Danby in the Privy Council, laboured successfully, not for the discovery of truth, but for the acceptance of these accusations. The first of these in particular, who had much to gain in the success of these odious machinations against the Duke of York, his personal enemy, carried his disbelief and contempt of justice and humanity to the verge of cynicism.

"A peer with whom he was intimate asked him one day how he proposed to get a tale so devoid of all semblance of probability received by men of sense, and above all by Members of Parliament. 'Its improbability,' replied Shaftesbury, 'is its best

[1] *History of England from the Accession of James II.* (c. ii.). The anxiety manifested by Lord Macaulay to find extenuating circumstances in the more ordinary cases of the public display of anti-Catholic feeling makes his strong condemnation of Protestant wickedness in this particular instance more valuable. They were dark days in England when the government was in the hands of men so utterly depraved.

friend ; the more absurd it is, the better likely to serve our purpose. If we cannot get them to swallow something even stronger than that, we shall make little of them.' "[1]

Titus Oates was the son of a needy minister of the State Church, in which he early took Orders. He was ejected from his first curacy at Hastings on two charges of perjury, and soon after lost, from scandalous behaviour, a subsequent appointment as chaplain on board a man-of-war. It was then that, reduced to the last extremity, and vainly seeking employment, he met Dr. Tonge, rector of St. Michael's, Wood Street, a fanatical, gloomy, eccentric man, whose imagination, depraved and overwrought, fed itself on dreams of plots and conspiracies.

Titus Oates was the very instrument needed by such a person. It was arranged that the young Anglican minister should feign conversion to the Catholic faith, and endeavour by such deception to gain acquaintance with the secrets of the Jesuits. We pass over the general history of the fabrication of the Plot, and take up the story where first it concerns the subject of our memoir. The panic of impending danger spread through London. In a few days upwards of two thousand suspected persons were thrown into prison. The Catholics were subjected to domiciliary visits ; persons, to the number of thirty thousand, who declined to take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, were prohibited from living within ten miles of

[1] Roger North, *Examen on an Inquiry into the credit and veracity of a pretended history tending to vindicate the honour of the late King Charles II.*

Whitehall, and fifty thousand men were speedily enrolled under arms to encounter the imaginary foe.

Charles II. was powerless to restrain the torrent. The Duke of York was expelled the Privy Council, and those Catholic Peers who refused the test oath were no longer permitted to take their seats in the House of Lords.

Father de la Colombière could not long escape the tempest that descended on all around him. According to Lingard, it was Luzancy, who, reappearing after three years' absence, denounced the Duchess of York's chaplain, as he had formerly Father Saint-Germain. Another account introduces a Frenchman of the name of Petit, of whom Oates made a tool by frightening him. In order to have something to lay before the Council, they consulted, as we are told by the account, a young French Protestant minister.

This person's name was Luzancy, who at once committed to writing and arranged the chief heads of accusation. They then presented the memoir to one Prance,[1] who gave it to his protector, the Bishop of London, who in his turn laid it before the Lord Chancellor. The document appearing to compromise Father de la Colombière, he was instantly confined to his private apartments in the palace, and two days afterwards, on the 26th of November, was conducted to prison.

According to Lingard, his imprisonment commenced on the 16th, but the discrepancy arises

[1] Trance or Prance was a London jeweller, and became Government informer. There were, it seems, two such, Luzancy and Prance, the two bribed witnesses who were the first to accuse Father de la Colombière, Olivier du Fiquet and François Verdier.

from the use of the old and new styles in the calendar. How were the two days preceding his captivity employed? Unquestionably in examining his papers and submitting the prisoner to severe interrogatories. The story that we are about to tell is explained and completed by what Father de la Colombière himself wrote to a Jesuit friend on the subject.

I was accused in London by a youth from Dauphiné, whom I believed I had converted, and whom I had maintained for nearly three months after his change of faith. Having some cause to complain of his conduct towards me, together with the impossibility of continuing to support him, I was compelled to dismiss him; he threatened to revenge himself by betraying our intercourse. Besides other calumnies, he imputed to me designs against the King and the Parliament. As he knew something of my doings, he was not slow to exaggerate into glaring crimes the little good I was able to effect amongst the Protestants,[1] and made it appear that I was far more zealous and successful in my labours than I really was. Owing to these charges, I was seized in my bedroom two hours after midnight, and flung into prison, from whence I was taken two days afterwards, and confronted with my accusers, before some twelve or fifteen Commissioners, of the House of Lords; subsequently I was taken back to captivity and kept in close confinement for three weeks.

Ingratitude had united with perfidy to destroy him, and he uttered not a word either of complaint

[1] It will be remarked that the Lords in their report speak of a great many converts, both French and English, whom the Father had received. And, although malice is quick-sighted, it is probable that in London the number of conversions was not known.

or displeasure at the traitor's conduct. His mind was solely occupied with guarding his humility. He was anxious lest his accuser's words should be taken too literally, as they tended, he thought, to bring out the ardour of his zeal.

His attitude, full of calm dignity, struck the spectators with admiration. Compelled to stand at the bar of the court, he was observed, regardless of the sneering crowd, to take his Breviary and quietly repeat the Divine Office. His demeanour was that of tranquil courage. It is needless to remark that nothing could be extracted from him respecting an imaginary conspiracy. The articles exhibited against him were as follows: (1) That he had said in a private conversation that the King was a Catholic at heart; (2) that Parliament would not always be master, nor possess its present authority. (3) That he was Coleman's intimate friend. (4) That he had persuaded an apostate monk to re-enter his convent, and another woman, who had become a Protestant, to abjure her errors. (5) That he was the Superintendent of a convent established secretly in London. (6) That he had sent missionaries to Virginia and Newfoundland. Thus he was treated as a criminal without reference to his character as a Frenchman, and in breach of the royal hospitality to which he had been confided. According to the Protestant historian, it seems that Luzancy strove with unbridled malice to drive the Jesuits to extremities; but his false imputations melted away before the straightforward replies of Father de la Colombière. They tried to frighten him with menaces, but in vain. What had he to fear? Was he not in the hands of God?

Did not he know that not a hair of his head could fall contrary to the will of his Heavenly Father? Besides, how blessed to die for the Name of Jesus Christ!

During his three weeks' rigorous imprisonment, the Parliamentary Commissioners again and again summoned the witnesses before them without obtaining fresh evidence. The Lords endeavoured to intermingle these charges with those of the imaginary plot, and so to unite in a similar fate both English and French Jesuits. Possibly Father de la Colombière might have succumbed to the malice of some false witnesses, when unexpected and powerful succour came to his aid.

Barillon,[1] the French Ambassador, took up the defence of the accused, and with all the more vigour, as he thoroughly disbelieved in the truth of the conspiracy. On the 20th of October he wrote: "They are very busy searching the correspondence of Master Coleman and the other arrested Catholics. No reasonable being credits the intention to assassinate the King of Great Britain. The Committee of Council intrusted with the investigation are of the like opinion, but at the same time assert that active negotiations are being carried on with foreign countries, very prejudicial to the national interest; that vast sums are expended in fomenting cabals,

[1] Paul Barillon d'Arnoncourt, Marquis de Branges, son of Jean Jacques de Barillon and de Bonne Fayet, appointed Counsellor of State the 13th of February, 1650, and Master of Requests the 6th of July, 1657, married in 1663 to Mary Magdalene Mangot de Villarceaux, was Plenipotentiary at Cologne, 1673, and Ambassador to London, 1677. He died in Paris the 23rd of July, 1693. His brother, Antoine de Barillon, Lord of Moranges, was King's Counsellor, Master of Requests, and Intendant at Metz, Alençon, and Caen.

and in the endeavour to spread the Catholic religion, and that by the English law the greater number of the prisoners are undoubtedly implicated. They speak very decidedly of Master Coleman, among whose papers they have found extracts of all his letters to Rome, written from France and elsewhere, disclosing, as they allege, plans for the destruction of the reformed faith in England, together with the overthrow of the Government, and the re-establishment of the Papal authority on its ruins. This is the Commissioners' version of the matter. Coleman's letters to Father de la Chaise abound with wild suggestions and designs, but those of the Father are distinguished for wisdom and moderation, especially one that has just been seized at Dover. At Newmarket, the King said, that if justice were done, Coleman could not escape death." On the 28th of November, the French Ambassador wrote again to Versailles: "The Duchess of York's Jesuit chaplain, Father de la Colombière, has been taken into custody, charged with attempting to convert a Protestant, and with having told him that the English King was really a Catholic."

Barillon naturally received instructions to work for the liberation of the prisoner in the name of his master. There followed an interchange of diplomatic notes between the two Courts. Louis XIV. insisted on the freedom of one of his subjects, against whom no serious accusation was made. The English Government wished to detain him on the ground that he had plotted against the sovereign's life, and was therefore unworthy of the French monarch's protection.

Arnaud de Pomponne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, transmitted instructions to the Ambassador at London conformably to the King's will. The English Government yielded to the pertinacity of the Versailles Cabinet, and Father de la Colombière owed to France his escape from the scaffold.

Having languished three weeks in captivity,[1] the French Jesuit at length received his sentence. The Commissioners reproached him above all for having alleged, what was undoubtedly true, that Charles II. had long been a Catholic by conviction, but this was so compromising in the sight of the Protestants that the King dreaded nothing more than to be suspected of a leaning towards the Roman Church. From their point of view, the Lords considered that to proclaim the Catholicity of the King was an injury and offence against the royal person.

The judgment pronounced was in these terms: "According to the report of the Lords Commissioners appointed to investigate the horrible plot against the King's life and his Government, the result of the questions put to Olivier du Fiquet

[1] We may thus judge of the length of Father de la Colombière's imprisonment. From a letter dated January 16, 1678, addressed to Father Louis de Pamaret, Provincial of Lyons, we see that the Father was in Paris at the beginning of the year. In another letter he speaks of his imprisonment as having lasted five weeks, and again of three weeks of close confinement. If we assign the 26th of November as the date of the beginning of his imprisonment, and include the ten days in which he was at large on parole, this will bring us to the 4th of January. Giving a week for his voyage and the journey from Calais to Paris, we arrive at the 10th of January, 1679, which was the probable date of his arrival in the French capital.

and François Verdier, both answering on their oath, is, that Colombière the Jesuit, Chaplain of the Duchess of York, and now prisoner in the King's Bench, had had long and frequent interviews with Coleman, and that he had held a voluminous correspondence with Père de la Chaise and Cardinal Bouillon; that he had attempted to pervert the said Olivier du Fiquet, François Verdier, and others to Popery, using for this purpose highly dangerous arguments, that he had received in his room a vast number of abjurations from both French and English subjects, and that he had also secretly sent missionaries to Virginia,—amongst them a certain MacCarthy, an Irish priest.

"These things promising serious consequences, constitute an obstacle to the national peace and the Government of the Kingdom; it is now ordained by the Lords spiritual and temporal in this present Parliament assembled, that the Peers, accompanied by White Rod, present an address to his Majesty: That it will please his Majesty to command that the said Colombière may be for ever banished from this Kingdom and from all the territories and dominions of the Crown.—Saturday, November 23rd."

The House was then adjourned for the Christmas holidays. On its re-assembling, Lord Maynard reported that the Peers, with White Rod, had attended the King and presented the address; that the royal reply was, that an order should be issued agreeably to its prayer, and that an officer should be directed to conduct the Jesuit at once on shipboard for his transport to France, and to

produce written evidence of having performed the charge. The sufferings, however, that Father de la Colombière had undergone during his captivity had affected his health, and an aggravation of his malady compelled him to solicit from his Majesty a reprieve. Ten days' grace was accorded him, and he was permitted to go at large on parole. He thus had the opportunity to take leave of several persons prior to his departure, much to his own consolation and to that of his many disciples. He had indeed found refuge under the wings of Providence, and had been protected in a marvellous manner.

Father de la Colombière himself tells us: "I should be tedious were I to give details of this little matter. I must fail in recounting the numberless mercies that God bestowed on me at every turn and at every moment; but what I will say is, that I have seldom experienced more joy than I did in the midst of that tempest, from which I emerged with regret, and now am in truth prepared to welcome others. I was unworthy of such happiness, and I reflect with heartfelt sorrow that our Lord withdrew me from His vineyard, finding me wanting in the fervent zeal which He demands from His labourers." Apart from these lines, inspired by the depth of his humility, we can well understand the feelings of joy he had experienced. Conscious of his innocence, it had indeed been sweet to him to be calumniated, publicly accused, thrown into prison, and exiled as a witness to the faith. Had he not often longed not only to suffer but to die for Christ? Already did he anticipate death with all

the impatience of one who seeks through the gate of martyrdom to enter Heaven. Our Lord accepted the generosity of his sacrifice, visiting him in his prison with Divine consolations ; but the confessor of Christ had to resign himself to live. He who would so willingly have died here a martyr's death was driven from England, leaving his spiritual children in sorrow and in tears, the Church desolate and for long years ruined, and the companions of his imprisonment about to suffer the extreme penalty of the law.

Sadly from the deck of the vessel did he gaze on the shores of England disappearing in the mist. He could not detach his eye from that scene of his labours and his prayers, and deeply sighing, bade adieu in these words to that beloved and suffering country : " Thou knowest, O Lord," he exclaimed from the depths of his heart, " that at a word, at the slightest intimation from my Superiors, I am willing to return to that shore to work and to suffer. Does Thy justice require yet another victim, take my life. Verily, O Lord, shouldst Thou restore this people to the fold of Thy Church Thou wouldst find amongst them many true and generous hearts there to glorify as in past days, Thy adorable Name." Plunged in reflections such as these, his mind absorbed in heavenly thoughts, Father de la Colombière approached the shores of France. Doubtless he loved his country and gladly revisited her, but his heart knew but one country—the heavenly inheritance. The late political and religious events in England had astounded and horrified Europe, and now, when the publication of the heads of accusation, drawn up in Holland by

Protestant hands, had enlightened men's minds as to the character of the whole business, the sentence of the House of Lords was placed at the bar of public opinion, and notwithstanding the excuses urged on behalf of its promoters, the truth could not fail of discovery.

As defenders of the injured and innocent on this occasion, we will cite the words of two, a Jansenist and a Protestant, whose testimony cannot be suspected of too friendly a bias. The former, though the hereditary enemy of the Jesuits, giving vent to a generous feeling of generous indignation, repels the unjust charges with the strongest reprobation in a book published in 1682, the very year of Father de la Colombière's death. "We should be mistaken," he says, "did we speak of what has lately taken place in England as a comedy. It is indeed a barbarous tragedy—the author the devil himself." Antoine Arnaud, having enumerated the futile accusations brought against Father de la Colombière, continues: "I ask every sensible man whether there is aught in these six articles which can be construed into the shadow of a conspiracy against the King or the State. But the exclamation of the Prophet Isaias when speaking of the Jewish people is true at this day of the English: *Omnia quæ loquitur populus iste conjuratio est—'To these men all is a conspiracy.'*"

Antoine Arnaud pursues his argument with crushing eloquence:

A Jesuit, living under the royal authority, chaplain to the King's sister-in-law, advises an apostate monk to return to his convent—a conspiracy. He is the director of some ladies in London who wish to live the religious

priest whose teaching and example was at that moment the mainstay of the faith. For a space Hell vaunted its triumph, but God speedily baffled its gloomy machinations. The blood of the martyrs, the prayers of the Catholics, the sufferings of the missionaries, were not spent in vain. What some sow in tears, others reap in joy.

Charles II. died a Catholic; James II. professed publicly the creed of Mary Stuart. It is true this Catholic King was driven from the throne, and schism was victorious through the usurpation of another branch of the family. All seemed lost for the Catholic cause; but human foresight was quite at fault. The good grain was deposited in a soil furrowed by the tempest; England, so long resolute in rebellion, is now at last turning towards Rome. Each day hastens her return, for she is impelled by an honest and sincere desire, founded on an investigation of Christian antiquity. She seizes with increasing ardour on the rites and ceremonies of a worship that she has proscribed. She sends her noblest sons to prostrate themselves at the feet of our common Father, in whom she has been accustomed to behold Anti-Christ. She reflects, she studies, and her prejudices vanish. The Catholic Hierarchy is re-established, converts are multiplied. Churches are counted by thousands, the faithful by millions. How magnificent are these conquests of the Sacred Heart amongst her people! How touching are the dealings of that Heart with those who have condemned and betrayed It!

CHAPTER XIV.

Temporary Residence at Paray-le-Monial.

1679.

EARLY in January, 1679, Father de la Colombière, worn and ill, came to Paris, his heart torn with the remembrance of the Catholics in London, of whom he said to one of his friends: "Pray for them, I entreat you, they are worthy of your interest and compassion, as suffering greatly and with the greatest constancy." Immediately on his arrival at the professed house in the Rue St. Antoine, he penned the following letter, the humility of whose tone we cannot but admire, to his Provincial.

Paris, 10th January, 1679,—Reverend Father,—Had it been possible for me before leaving England to have forwarded a letter to France, I should ere this have informed your Reverence of the exile from England to which I have been condemned, and should perhaps in that case have found on my arrival here your orders as to my future movements. Thinking that a prolonged sojourn in this city may not be advisable for me, I propose, should I receive no instructions from you before then, going on the 29th instant, my health permitting, to Lyons, there to await your commands.

Father de la Colombière was anxious to leave Paris as soon as possible, to escape from the

enthusiasm which the presence of so eminent a confessor of the faith excited in that city, and to make good his retreat to a more congenial atmosphere of silence and solitude. Courtesy required that he should call on Father de la Chaise to acquaint him with the state of England, and to furnish him with the details of the famous conspiracy in which his name had so frequently appeared. Father de la Colombière had also probably an audience of M. Arnaud de Pomponne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, whom he would be anxious to thank for his recent diplomatic assistance. We can well understand that the chaplain and confessor of the Duchess of York, so well known for his learning and virtue, with all the halo of recent persecution around him, would naturally excite the respect and sympathy of the religious world at that period. Hence the abundant congratulations which proved so heavy a burden to the pious Jesuit.

We are again struck with the extent of his humility when writing to his Superior, he says:

I deeply grieve to return amongst my brethren in a state of health which promises to allow of very little work on my part this year. My lungs are so much affected and so susceptible of cold that, on one occasion, some mental excitement, and on another a slight chill, sufficed to bring on a relapse. But the English doctors assure me the milder climate of France and the return of spring will infallibly restore me to my former state of health. The will of God in all be done! I believe that, with the exception of preaching, I could even now do any work you may ask of me, and even if you bid me preach, I should not fear to try. Perhaps I am wrong

in thinking it would hurt me; your Reverence's commands would make me change my opinion, and, in a matter of obedience, I should hope by the grace of God to find nothing impossible.

Truly, if a man may be judged by his words, Father de la Colombière must have been a perfect Religious, dead to himself, and only anxious to carry out in his life the will of his Superiors. He received instructions to repair to Lyons by short stages for the sake of his health, with permission, did he think it well, to break the journey by resting a few days on the road. He took the route through Burgundy, making a first halt at Dijon, where he remained a night or two. Here, in the Convent of the Visitation, he found Mère de Saumaise, his pious and discreet confidante. Father de la Colombière had always thought most highly of this good and humble Religious, and was most anxious to hear from her some news of Sister Margaret Mary, and learn the result of the marvellous revelations of which the earlier ones had been communicated to him. No memorials of what he gathered on that subject have been left us.

We are told, however, that Mère de Saumaise being summoned away during his visit, and the community assembled in the parlour, he took occasion of her absence to congratulate the Sisters on their Mother, humbly adding that he himself should esteem it a privilege to be under such guidance. Father de la Colombière went to Paray from Dijon. His friends scarcely knew him when led by the same Hand which had brought him there four years previously. They

failed to recognize in the invalid, to whom breathing was a difficulty, the young Religious at once so brilliant and so modest, whose conversation had charmed them by its grace and vigour. He seemed, to quote the words of Scripture, as one "who came out of great tribulations." But the peace which reigned in his heart, the ardour which lighted up his haggard features, the devout recollectedness of his demeanour at the altar, all testified that these tribulations had been blessed to him, and had bathed his soul yet more deeply in the Blood of the Lamb.

The inhabitants of Paray welcomed him with pious and reverent enthusiasm as their spiritual father and a confessor of the faith. The Curé and his associate priests, the members of congregations, the different guilds of the town, in fact, the entire population was stirred by the news of his arrival. An influx of visitors invaded the college, to the warmth of whose reception Father de la Colombière could not deny himself.

God, Who had yet hard work for him in the vineyard, partially restored his strength, and a little later he writes to Mother de Saumaise :

I arrived at Paray in a very poor state of health, but in two days became so much better, that for a whole week I have worked from morning to night without any mischievous result. I cannot tell you what subjects of thanksgiving I have found awaiting me here ; all is going on well, everything seems to have made visible progress since I left. You may imagine that, in the short eight days since my arrival, I have not found time for very long conversations with the many persons who were anxious to see me. Nevertheless it has pleased God so

to bless the few words I have been able to address to each, that there has been something of a revival amongst the people.

This passing visit of Father de la Colombière to Paray may well be called a mission. The hearts of many were stirred within them, and not a few consciences awakened by his presence. The weak were strengthened, the sorrowful consoled, and with joy the sower saw the seed sown by him in former years sprung up and bearing fruit. He had many interviews with Mère Greyfié, Superior of the Convent of the Visitation, who had still some doubts as to the spiritual state of Sister Margaret Mary. That humble disciple of the Sacred Heart had so little confidence in herself that she was often a prey to fears, and trembled lest the graces she received might be temptations of the evil one. Her fears were contagious, and affected the Mother Superior. She needed the support of a man like Father de la Colombière, whose reputation for learning and piety gave him authority to decide in such cases. He hesitated not to declare that the revelations of which Margaret Mary was the recipient were truly the work of the Spirit of God, and he added should they even be of the devil there was nothing to fear from them, so long as they produced in her effects and graces pleasing to the Lord. "But from no point of view do they to me resemble delusions, since, were they such, the devil in deceiving her would be injuring his own cause, humility, simplicity, obedience, not being the fruits he could produce in a soul." Mère Greyfié was fully reassured ; she had indeed already remarked Sister Margaret

Mary's faithful adherence to these virtues, and scrupulous observance of her religious duties. But notwithstanding these consolations, Father de la Colombière was greatly needed to support and encourage his spiritual daughter. The devil at this time assaulted her with terrible temptations, persuading her that so vile a creature could never hope to enter Paradise or have any part in the love of God. These suggestions caused her many bitter tears. Sensual thoughts were also allowed to disturb her soul, but what affected her most painfully was the dread of having offended God, and being deprived of His grace.

Her Lord sent His holy priest as an angel of consolation to dispel these depressing fears, and restore peace to the heart of His faithful handmaid. Father de la Colombière preferred to speak to her in the confessional, rather than elsewhere, hoping in that tribunal to be more effectually inspired from on high in her behalf, and there it was that he was made the recipient of her most remarkable communications. He detained her on this occasion a considerable time, as there were many points to decide on which she had asked his guidance. This lengthened conference gave occasion to expressions of ill-will in the community. "It is," thought some aggrieved Sisters, "highly presumptuous in her to appropriate to herself so much of the Reverend Father's time." These murmurs were a source of fresh mortification to the Saint, but, as she accepted them with her habitual patience, only gave additional strength to her humility. She felt this but a small price to pay for the relief of opening her heart to her confessor, to him in whom

she had been commanded by Heaven to confide. "I was only able to see Sister Margaret Mary once," wrote the Father, "but that single interview was full of consolation to me. I found in her a deep humility, and an unfeigned love of the Cross and its mortifications. These are the truest marks by which to discern by what spirit she is guided, marks which have never been deceptive."

Father de la Colombière had said, "All has made progress during my absence," and truly the holiness of Blessed Margaret Mary shone with increased brilliancy, and God had developed in her yet more plainly the marvels of His grace. In the midst of trials and contradictions the love of God had augmented in the heart of this humble nun, even as fire increases and spreads itself when the wind blows upon it, and He Who loves the lowly spirit took up His abode in this soul, so detached from the world and from self. Others of the Reverend Father's spiritual daughters availed themselves with joy of this his passing visit to present themselves at his confessional. We may mention in particular two nuns of the Order of the Visitation, Sister Marie Emérentienne Rosselin and Sister Anne Marie Cordier.

The thought of God's future judgments filled the heart of the former of these ladies with overwhelming fear. Our Lord, Who metes out succour to His elect according to their need, arranged that each, at this trying period of her religious life, should find herself under the guidance of this able director. During his absence, he had endeavoured to strengthen her courage by letter, and was now able to renew and enforce his instructions by word

of mouth. The second, Sister Anne Marie, had responded with wonderful ardour to the teachings of the Reverend Father, and attained an extraordinary detachment from the things of the world. She loved only her Rule, and was in the hands of her Superior as a little child or a piece of wax, to be used and treated as those, beneath whose direction she was, thought best.[1]

Among the pious souls, who, formerly under his spiritual guidance, had maintained a correspondence with Father de la Colombière, we may particularly mention Madame de Lyonne, who had consented with much difficulty to the retirement of her daughter from the world ; Madame de Maréchalle, exposed to the violent opposition of her heretical daughters ; Mlle. de Bisefraud, Mlle. Rosalie de Lyonne, and others whom it is unnecessary to enumerate.

Mlle. Rosalie de Lyonne, of whom we have previously spoken, had bitterly felt Father de la Colombière's departure for England, and had often commended herself to his remembrance by letter, and the good priest, in the midst of all his labours, found time occasionally to send her a few lines of encouragement. "I never doubted, Mademoiselle," he writes to her from London, "but that you would persevere in the ways of God, and that He, to Whose care I commended you in parting, would watch over your future. I was, however, truly glad

[1] Sister Mary Catharine Carme, of Chailloux, also begged for his assistance. She suffered much from spiritual depression, and Father de la Colombière, during his first residence at Paray, vainly endeavoured to reassure her. On his return from England, she was never able to accomplish her ardent wish to consult him again.

to hear of your spiritual well-being from yourself, who alone could give me satisfactory assurance on the subject. I rejoice to know you are in the safe keeping of Him Whom you have chosen as your Master and Spouse." She had taken a vow of chastity, and Father de la Colombière counsels her with much paternal solicitude for the welfare of her soul. As his affection for her was strong, and removed from worldly conventionality, he shrank not from speaking to her of her faults. "Beware," he said, "of a contemptuous demeanour contrary to humility, and often more displeasing, I can assure you, to others than a violent temper. Silence is golden, but speech is necessary and right when silence would be misunderstood. In short, Mademoiselle, we must be patient with our neighbour, and like our Blessed Lord, gentle in deed, in thought, and word. Gentleness is a virtue, which I commend you before all, so precious is it in the sight of God."

A haughty and disdainful manner was indeed the too striking characteristic of Mlle. de Lyonne, but gradually she became more humble. God had a wonderful visitation in store for her soul. One morning, awaking from sleep, she beheld the suffering soul of a young gentleman of Lyons, who had long wooed her, and had lately fallen in a duel. This mysterious interview left her pale and almost lifeless, and till the day of her death her complexion was of an ashen hue. She could not, however, summon courage to leave the world, but God, Who designed her for the cloister, revealed His wishes to Sister Margaret Mary. These she communicated to Father de la Colombière, who

instantly introduced her to Mlle. de Lyonne. But so great was the repugnance of the latter to entering the religious state, that on receiving a note from her director, beginning, "You must die to self, my dear child," scarcely had she read the words, "You must die," that fancying they referred to her taking the veil, she fainted, burst into tears, and could not be consoled until convinced of their real meaning.

Such was the state of her mind on the arrival of Father de la Colombière at Paray. Doubtless he spoke to her authoritatively, but with much patience and gentleness, of the duty of fulfilling the designs of Providence, and of deferring to the advice of Sister Margaret Mary. Unable to resist the spiritual ascendancy he had over her, she promised obedience, but delayed taking any immediate steps in the matter. We shall see later how grace pursued this fugitive until she acknowledged herself vanquished. It was at this time that the Father again saw Sister Mary, the lady who had travelled from London to France in obedience to an extraordinary vocation, and whom he had placed in the Convent of the Ursulines at Paray. She lived there obscure and hidden from the world in the practice of virtues, known only to God and the angels.

It had been revealed to Blessed Margaret Mary, even before the departure of Father de la Colombière for England, that God was about to place in a convent of the Visitation an English lady, a widow and a Catholic, residing in the Ursuline Convent at Paray. On his return she communicated to him the Divine intentions concerning this

soul. Not for a moment did he question this revelation, but instantly made it known to Sister Mary, and before leaving Paray begged her to confide all her history and difficulties to Blessed Margaret Mary. "I am introducing you," he said, "to one who will sympathize in all your sorrows, one with whom God speaks as familiarly as I do to you."

Some time later Sister Mary quitted the Ursulines to enter the Convent of the Visitation at Charolles, where she was most warmly received. On the day of her clothing, she took two names, which recalled the persons for whom she had the deepest gratitude, and was henceforth known as Sister Claude Mary. About the time of her admission to the community, Father de la Colombière wrote a touchingly eloquent letter to the Mother Superior, reminding one of that of St. Paul to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus:

I thank God with all my heart for His goodness to Sister Mary in inspiring your community with the charity to admit her to so honourable a position amongst you. I will not dwell on my personal obligation, being sure that the Lord, for Whose love you have done this generous act, will not leave you without recompense, but will, on this account, shower such blessings on your house, that you will find that none of your spiritual daughters have brought you so large a dower as she who came portionless. For the moment I can contribute nothing; the English ladies are scattered, and are in danger of losing all they possess in France. I know no one able to supply the money, but believe me the Lord Jesus is well able to make the whole debt good to you. Receive this poor stranger,

whom He has sent you as from His hands, with no object but to please Him, and I can safely assure you, you will lose nothing by so doing. I will willingly be surety, do you require such, for her on whose behalf you have made so many sacrifices, trusting to her word for any future repayment.

These ten days spent by Father de la Colombière in the beloved atmosphere of Paray, passed rapidly in exercises of piety and charity. He addressed some words of exhortation to the communities of St. Ursula and the Visitation, called his dear congregations of former years together and kindled in their hearts somewhat of the fervent love which burnt in his own to God and man. He urged on them the duty of building a hospital for the town without delay. The asylum of St. Louis[1] had already been founded; but as yet Paray had no convenient hospital, for the little building holding four beds in which the sick poor were tended by paid nurses, could scarcely be called such.

Since the year 1676, Father de la Colombière had constantly impressed on the people of Paray how much it was their duty to do for the poor. St. Joseph's Home sadly needed enlarging, and on this subject, the better to acquaint himself with the will of God, he consulted Blessed Margaret Mary, his helpmate in all these undertakings. To her it was revealed that the work should eventually prosper, and henceforth she seconded it to the utmost of her power, and after the death of her

[1] The Hospital of St. Louis was entirely dependent on voluntary subscriptions, whether in the form of money or other assistance. It was in existence forty years. The building still stands and is a private house.

pious director became the adviser and inspirer of those who followed in his steps.

The Father urged the richest and most influential inhabitants of the town to realize his proposal of building a hospital to be under the care of nursing Sisters. His exhortations were crowned with success, for we find a meeting of the principal inhabitants was held on the 1st of May, 1679, at the house of M. Bouillet, lawyer and Judge of Paray. It was presided over by M. Jean Eléonor Bouillet, vicar of Paray, and M. Benoit Palamède Baudinot de Selovre, King's advocate in the Burgundian Parliament. A document was then drawn up which endowed the building with a sum for the maintenance of the sick poor.[1]

The names of some of these charitable people may yet be found amongst the chief families in the neighbourhood of Paray; for instance, that of M. Guillaume Billet, the doctor, and Pierre Billet, royal notary, whose sister, Claude Margaret, was a

[1] See an ancient manuscript in the Archives of the Hospital. The Hospital of St. Joseph founded by Father de la Colombière in 1679, and confided in 1684 to the care of the Sœurs Hospitalieres. The general hospital was founded in 1694, during a time of much sickness, the result of want amongst the population. Its principal promoter was Father de Villette, Superior of the Jesuits at Paray in 1691. The Hospital of Paray, now entirely rebuilt and in the most perfect order, boasts of having had for its founders the Blessed Margaret Mary and Father de la Colombière. The community religiously treasures a little book of prayers composed and partly written by the Saint in honour of the Sacred Heart, a portrait of Father de la Colombière, and an altar in wooden gilt, at which the servant of God must often have offered the Holy Sacrifice, and which was given to the hospital on the suppression of the Jesuits. The Blessed Benedict Joseph Labre received hospitality in the ancient building; the place is thus rich in pious memories.

nun in the Convent of the Visitation. Both these gentlemen were brothers of Father Antoine Billet, Provincial of Lyons in the year 1690, and Etienne Chalon, another royal notary, whose eldest son had become[1] a Jesuit, and whose daughter was also at the Visitation. These formed a united band of friends full of veneration for Father de la Colombière.

This passing residence in a town so full to him of pious and cherished memories was a consolation specially provided by God for His faithful servant. The joy was given him of again offering the Holy Sacrifice on an altar whose marvellous sanctity was known to few but himself, and of kissing that stone on which had reposed the feet of Jesus. It was whilst he was celebrating Mass for the community in that very chapel that God had revealed such graces on his behalf, and there that on the 21st of June, 1675, he had dedicated himself to the Sacred Heart, and recalling the many blessings with which that devotion had endowed him, he grew in a lasting conviction of its importance and utility.

Great, however, as was his esteem, and, we may say, reverence, for Blessed Margaret Mary, a feeling which increased with his knowledge of her virtues and sanctity, Father de la Colombière was very reserved in all his communications with that holy Religious. He saw her rarely and on this occasion had but one interview with her. They scarcely ever corresponded. If the Saint had a communication to make him, some revelation to transmit, she wrote it on a slip of paper which she gave to her

[1] Paray had already given to the Society of Jesus the celebrated poet and distinguished theologian, Father Vavasseur.

Superior to send or not, as was deemed best. The Father replied under cover, or rather in his letter, to the Superior.

A heavenly detachment marks these short and unfrequent communications; they have in them nothing of the earth. The director and his spiritual daughter needed not the ordinary channels of intercourse to understand each other, the hearts of both were opened before their common Lord.

The Blessed Margaret Mary writes to Mère de Saumaise:

> I recommend the Rev. Father de la Colombière, of whom you inquire of me, to your prayers; his health, as I gather from his letter to Madame de Lyonne, is not fully re-established. I have not heard from him myself. Not but that I did myself the honour of writing to him, but he has not thought well to reply. However he treats me, I shall be content, knowing the will of God, to which he is so truly devoted, to be our only object.

Father de la Colombière left Paray for Lyons, where he was to receive a destination suited to the delicate state of his health, and to edify his brethren by the example of his virtues.

CHAPTER XV.

Residence at Lyons.

1679—1681.

It was on the 11th of March, 1679, that Father de la Colombière once more revisited the city within whose walls he had spent the greater portion of his life. It was at Lyons his holy childhood, the studious days of youth and professorship, his theological course, as also that year of blessing, the third probation, had glided by. On his arrival, he felt more fatigue than he had experienced since his departure from London. The blood-spitting recommenced, and he nearly relapsed into that distressing state which had given rise to the dread of a fatal termination to the disease.

I believe [he wrote on the 25th of that month] that a slight bleeding has saved me from a relapse. I think I am somewhat better the last two days. Since my arrival here I have, by the doctor's orders, eaten meat even on Fridays and Saturdays, and shall soon be able to take ass's milk, from which I hope to obtain some relief. God's will be done.

It was assuredly a great mortification to this holy man to be reduced to follow such a regimen. He reminds one of St. Aloysius, who, when an invalid,

and eating by the doctor's orders the wings of a chicken on a fast-day, answered a Religious who bantered him on the subject, "What am I to do? I am become, in the language of the prophet, like one deprived of sense in the presence of God"—*Ut jumentum factus sum apud te.*[1] It was humiliating to this holy Religious to be obliged to take such care of himself. But his Superiors had spoken, his duty was but to obey. To fulfil their desire for his recovery, in order that he might again labour in the vineyard, it was necessary to use all means conducive to that end.

He himself ardently desired his recovery, feeling acutely the constraint of inactivity when there were so many fields awaiting the reaper. The days spent at Paray had been a time of many consolations, in which his friends and spiritual children disputed amongst themselves a few moments' intercourse with him. Under the pressure of this gratifying reception, he forgot for a moment his suffering state; but when should he be able once again to embark in the holy career of an apostle? A faint hope of a possible return to England had dawned on him. The letters of the Duke and Duchess of York, filled with praise of his talents and virtues, addressed to the Court of Louis XIV., and the openly expressed wishes of their Royal Highnesses that they might see him again in happier times, made him think that a second journey to the "country of crosses," as he called England, was not impossible eventually. For himself, he was in every way disposed to resume his laborious and fruitful ministry in that country where he had

[1] Psalm lxxii.

found so many chosen souls. There was, however, but slight hope that he would ever again be able to visit the shores of Britain. For besides the many political reasons which during many years would prevent his return, the deadly nature of his disease made him feel that the sacrifice required of him by God was that which is most trying to the apostolic heart, namely, the suspension of labour. In seeking to lift the veil of the future, he perceived these two alternatives, either an early death, which would for ever put an end to his already interrupted career, or an infirm and lingering existence painfully dragged out in silence and obscurity, making him for the future a useless burthen to the Society. We can imagine how painful to humble and sensitive natures must be the fear of being a burthen to others; but, God be praised, fraternal charity in religious houses is able to soften whatever in such a position there may be which is sad and humiliating. There more clearly than elsewhere is it recognized that prayer is often more efficacious than action in the work of saving souls, and that the presence of a saint who suffers and prays draws down the blessing of Heaven on the roof whose hospitality he shares. As soon as Father de la Colombière had regained a little strength, the Principal entrusted him with the spiritual guidance of fifteen or sixteen young Religious, who were going through the philosophical course at the College of the Holy Trinity.

It was an appointment which, whilst entailing on him but slight fatigue, implied the utmost confidence in his piety and discretion. To hear the confessions of the Religious, to hold spiritual con-

ferences with them, and sometimes to speak words of exhortation to the community, such were all the duties he was called on to perform. Gifted in a special manner with the qualities best fitted for drawing the souls of those committed to his paternal care to that which was good and holy, he was himself a model of perfection, and his very presence in the midst of the young Religious was in itself a sermon.

Affability and gentleness marked his every action, and there was something so elevated in his bearing that each movement seemed to speak the nearness of his heart to God. His grave demeanour was never forbidding, and when occasion permitted him to exhibit his social powers, he seemed born to please. In conversation, if the interests of truth demanded his disagreement with the opinions of others, he gave his own with so much modesty, and at the same time with such force of argument, that he generally won the opposing party to his way of thinking without their feeling humiliated at his victory. So unobtrusive was the manner of Father de la Colombière whilst teaching others, that one might have thought from it that it was he who was the learner. Whether silent, or in conversation, his countenance, his attitude, in fact, his whole person, seemed without the slightest effort naturally to adapt themselves to every position, whilst the simple purity and recollectedness of his demeanour won the esteem and confidence of all. It may well be conceived that such a man was always sufficiently master of himself to bridle and curb those unruly passions which are at times so apt to overtake and surprise the most self-disciplined natures. The virtue and piety which governed his life spread over his actions a charm which delighted, and at the same time edified all who had any relations with him. Devoted

as he was to the practice of perfection, he always seemed under the influence of some high and holy idea, the reflection of which was ever visible in his countenance. Imbued with a sense of the Majesty of God and the littleness of man, he could not but communicate some of the feelings in which his soul was steeped to others, inspiring them by his words and demeanour with the love of God and the desire of holiness.

The contemporary to whose pen we are indebted for this sketch of Father de la Colombière, represents him as the very perfection of a model to propose to young Religious, and his suffering state was the finishing touch which completed the portrait of the saint.

He himself, however, writing to Blessed Margaret Mary, and speaking of the students confided to his care, says that he set them but a poor example. "Pray for them to our dear Lord. I have been asked to bring one especially to your notice, who is not indeed under my tuition, but towards whom I blame myself for not exhibiting sufficient zeal (he alluded to himself), and feel much for him who requested this of me (probably Father Billet). Please remember them both in your prayers."

During the first part of his stay at Lyons he was scarcely able to write at all, but he received many letters which, when obliged to answer, we find him doing in a few lines, apologizing on the ground of his weakness for not writing more. During these alternative states of health and sickness, it was as much as he could manage to address at long intervals a few words of exhortation to a small audience composed of the Fathers, young Religious, and brethren forming the community.

Whilst yet suffering so much, he wrote to his spiritual daughters, who, though beseeching him to be careful of his health, constantly applied to him for direction and advice, without reflecting on the fatigue which compliance with these pious requests entailed. His love of work, and hope of doing good to souls, kept up his courage, and he bore with Christian fortitude the burthen of this correspondence.

These letters dated from Lyons have been collected, and their perusal will show how valuable was his aid to many. Members of his Order, people living in the world, priests and religious of various foundations, all addressed themselves in their religious needs to this servant of our Lord. His answers are for the most part masterpieces of acute observation and conciseness of style. In them he always exhibits himself the Religious, striving to free himself from human trammels, never hiding the truth, bearing in mind the celebrated saying, *Amicus Plato, magis amica Veritas*—"Plato is a friend, but Truth is a greater."

He never forgot his old neighbour, the Curé of Paray, and the inhabitants of that beloved town. To the former he writes:

What will you say, sir, to my idleness? Is it not strange that I have so long delayed answering the letter of one for whom I have so much esteem, and to whom I am under so many obligations? The truth is I have felt incapable of writing, but am sure, under the circumstances, of your forgiveness. [He then speaks hopefully to the old priest of a matter relating to his flock.] I often pray for you and for all the members of your congregation, and heartily trust they may be filled

with a blessing from above. What would I not give that they might be such as I wish them! I commend your large family to your constant care and daily prayers for them to God, their great Father, Who has entrusted these, His dear children, to your charge. Forgive me, reverend sir, that I write but a few lines; may the deep feeling which accompanies them for you all stand in the place of a longer letter. Much as I should like to do so, I shall not be able to come and see you for some time. Remember me in your prayers, and doubt not that mine are daily offered to our Lord for the father and the children, and that I am with the deepest attachment, &c.

This letter is a lasting memorial of the affection of Father de la Colombière for the inhabitants of Paray; of the reciprocity of this feeling we shall have an affecting proof at the time of his decease.

By such means as the above did Providence still deign to employ him as an instrument for the salvation of souls. In the midst of the leisure which sickness necessitates, this faithful disciple of the Heart of Jesus drew from that Divine Source patience, consolation, and light, both for himself and for those whom, at home and abroad, he was striving to guide in the ways of holiness.

As time went on, Father de la Colombière's health became weaker and weaker, and as early as the autumn of 1679, it was thought that he was dying. But such was not the case, he struggled through the winter, and with the spring came a decided change for the better. The prayers of many for the sick man had been heard. Writing to the Superior of the Convent of the Visitation, he says,

"You have prayed so earnestly for my restoration to health that God has heard your petition, and I feel better than I have done since my return from England, but your task will not be complete until I am as well as I was before. Let your unceasing prayer to Heaven for me be that, if I am to recover, the gift to live as I should live may be given me. I shall have special need of help to live when restored to health, that I may have no reason to regret my recovery. Did I foresee that in the future there should be within me aught of worldliness or a diminution of devotion to the service of God, I would a thousand times prefer to die." How evident is the fixity of his intention to live solely to God! notwithstanding the suffering state of his body, the soul had evidently retained all its energy.

During the vacation, he established himself at Vernay, a country house situated on the banks of the Saône, not far from Lyons, an agreeable retreat, where fresh air, silence, and repose renewed his strength. He greatly enjoyed the fine autumn weather, prayer, the occupations common to the community, and walks in the park, filling up his day, and in his usual spirit of love and obedience, he, as long as his health permitted, joined his brethren in the hours of recreation, delighting them with the charms of his conversation.

The vacation over, he recommenced his holy and responsible duties at the College of the Holy Trinity, but his frequent and serious relapses now began to preclude all hope of the ultimate recovery of his health, and with deep humility he said: "I now see that God no longer will deign to make use

of me, having found me unworthy to be employed in the saving of souls."

This, his idea of the value of his labours, was little in accord with that entertained of them in the University. The confidence they placed in him sufficiently showed the esteem in which he was held by his elder brethren, who thought so highly of his training of the favoured youths whose religious education had been entrusted to his care. Nor was he held in less esteem in the city of Lyons. The Lyonnese had by no means forgotten his brilliant reputation as a professor and an orator, and, being no longer able to hear his voice in the pulpits of their churches, they endeavoured to indemnify themselves for this privation by visiting him at the College, some to mark their sympathy for his sufferings, others to consult him on behalf of their souls. A man of prayer, constantly in communion with God, all his thoughts habitually dwelt on that eternal source of grace. Neither was any earthly inducement able to turn them therefrom. "On whatever subject," says a contemporary, "his opinion was asked, his upright and enlightened mind enabled him to judge with wonderful precision, and to the unprejudiced there was never any appeal from his decisions. In his eyes, matters were important in proportion to their relation to the glory of God. When, therefore, he had disposed of any subject on which he had been consulted, his thoughts quickly reverted to the habitual contemplation of eternal truths, or rather the subject under discussion had been so linked with that contemplation as never to have withdrawn him from it."

Besides, as has been justly observed, men who never lose sight of another world are precisely the persons best calculated to advise others. The continual communion of their souls with God permits them to quaff deep draughts from the Fountain of all wisdom.

These reflections lead us to speak of the talents of Father de la Colombière, or rather of the special gifts which he had received from on high for the saving of souls. At the end of the scholastic year, 1680, his Superior sent him to stay with his brother, M. Humbert de la Colombière, that he might breathe his native air. He was to obey his brother in all things. Before following him to St. Symphorien, we shall say a few words on his gifts as a director.

CHAPTER XVI.

Spiritual Direction and Ascetical Teaching.

THOSE desirous of approaching God in the paths of perfection, value most highly the guidance of a wise and experienced director, and the Lord, Who, in the ordinary economy of the world, operates through the interposition of secondary agents, provides these helps for such as earnestly desire assistance, and, though He Himself is the great sanctifier of souls, permits His priests to second Him in the Divine work.

Saints are created by these good directors, and we should indeed pray for the increase amongst us of humble and pious men devoted to this laborious but fruitful ministry. Father de la Colombière accomplished more, we think we may safely say, for the conversion of souls in the confessional than in the pulpit. He was not a hard and bitter philosopher, like the author of the *Maxims*, nor a gloomy ascetic as the writers of Port Royal; his rule of life was that of the Gospel, his code of morals that which our Lord Himself traced for the practice of souls responding to His love. Father de la Colombière was gifted with a clear insight of one accustomed to study his own heart, to mark its secret movements and inspirations, in a word, he was intimately acquainted with human nature.

He was deeply impressed with the infinite

holiness of God, and the necessity under which men lie to labour for the sanctification of their souls; but whilst setting before his penitents the highest aim of self-sacrifice and perfection, he forgot not the patience with which our Lord awaits year after year the salvation of souls, and never wearied in entreaties and exhortations until the triumph of grace was completed. The direction of Father de la Colombière has in it those Divine characteristics, force and gentleness. His manner reminds one of St. Francis de Sales; indeed, in many particulars, this pious Jesuit resembled the celebrated Bishop of Geneva. To both was given the honour and privilege of being the director of a saint, and Heaven marked its approval of the wisdom and prudence with which they fulfilled so responsible a task. Both were writers of the seventeenth century, the language of the Bishop having all the grace and originality belonging to the first half of that period, the style of the Jesuit being that more correct and severe one of the second half. Both have much ease and sweetness of expression, clear and practical views of life; they exercised the functions of their ministry with a remarkable discretion, and in influence and authority they have seldom been surpassed. The writings of Father de la Colombière, in the closeness of their reasoning and the classical turn of many expressions, remind us of those of Fénélon. A very intimate knowledge of the human heart is displayed in the following opening sentences which preface his "Spiritual Retreat."

My God, I feel within me no desire for this high perfection, and am haply far estranged therefrom; but if

Thy Divine bounty should design to change my heart, to give me courage to drive me against my will from the world, I humbly and devoutly hope I may not frustrate Thy operations. Thou knowest by what means my rebellious nature might be conquered and subdued, and such means are within Thy hands. The thought of the life of perfection alarms me, but it is with Thee to take from me this criminal fear, and make dear to me all which now is repulsive in it to my weak and erring nature.

What soul to whom has been given a vocation for the life of Christian perfection, but has at some period of its course trembled at that which is before it, crying out: "*Thy ways, O Lord, make me afraid.*" Profoundly versed was Father de la Colombière in the frailties with which even those amongst us whose aim is highest are beset.

Again we quote from Father de la Colombière:

Many and powerful are the enemies which spring up around us from the moment we resolve on seeking the higher life. All the powers of evil are let loose against us; the devil and his wiles, the world and its allurements, and nature with her hatred of all things spiritual. The praise of the good, the sneers of the wicked, the counsels of the lukewarm, all are snares in our path. If we are visited by Divine consolations we make of them sources of vanity, if left to ourselves trouble and despair quickly take the place of fervour. Our friends are snares to us in our over-desire to please them, our enemies in our fear of offending them. When zealous we have to guard against indiscretion, against indolence in moderation, against self on every side.

He proceeds to examine that fear of men called human respect, whose malignant influence makes

itself so largely felt in the religious world, and affirms with grief that men would often rather expose themselves to the wrath of God than draw on themselves the displeasure of their fellow-mortals. How often are not good aspirations crushed under the weight of public opinion!

"What will people say of me?" they cry; "they will think I am about to become a bigot—a devotee. I have adopted a certain style of life; had I to begin again I might arrange things differently, but as it is, I should make myself remarkable were I to do as I willingly would did I dare;" and thus [adds the Father] before we are aware life slips away, and intimidated by the fear of man, we do nothing for our salvation.

And for what do we thus sacrifice everything in our desire to please men? What good expect we from them? We are greater slaves in this than they who labour for money. How blind are we! these very men, to whose opinion you sacrifice your duties, are the first to expect a devout regularity from you, and despise you when they find it wanting. They recognize that it was for the practice of piety, devotion, and mortification, that you retired from the world, and when they perceive you to fail in any of these, they look upon you as foolish, and point the finger of scorn as at one who has missed his aim. "Did he wish to be as we are?" they say; "why, then, did he not remain in the world, where he could innocently have lived the very life which he cannot in Religion without peril to his soul?" This is how they, of whose judgment we take such account, speak of us. Are we not indeed, O my God, most miserable! we fail to please Thee and forfeit the respect of men. Had we deferred as much to Thee, Thou, O Lord, wouldst have judged us more favourably, and men would not have despised us, for virtue is honourable in the eyes of all, even of such as practise it not themselves.

It was thus that Father de la Colombière unmasked one of the subtlest and most inveterate of human weaknesses. How true are his remarks! none can gainsay his too well-grounded accusation. He was, indeed, an adept at sounding the vices and passions of the soul, but availed himself of his skill only for the healing of the diseases he thus recognized.

A man of great observation, Father Gallifet, says of him, that he was a Religious of eminent virtue, and endowed by God with a rare insight into souls for the binding up of spiritual wounds. He exercised his functions as director on behalf of persons of all classes without prejudice or selection. His penitents were, however, chiefly nuns or women living in the world, and over such his influence was immense. His personal character doubtless added greatly to the weight of his authority and completely justified the high esteem in which he was held. A gifted and eloquent priest will naturally draw many to his confessional, and if he is also known to be a man of piety, he offers all the qualifications sought in a guide and confidant of souls. Such was Father de la Colombière. His gracious and high-bred manner, his learning and talents attracted all who came in contact with him, many of whom were afterwards inspired by the depth of his piety to place themselves under his direction. The secret indeed of the great influence to which all so gladly submitted was, that with Father de la Colombière the things of God and the interests of the eternal world were paramount. It is the great honour and privilege of a true director, that his voice is, as it

were, the voice of Heaven, and that to the faithful he in his sacred capacity speaks with the authority of God.

We must not, however, let our readers suppose that Father de la Colombière exercised these important functions with a mildness in any way akin to weakness, or showed himself content with that only which could not be absolutely refused him. No, such was not his method of dealing with his penitents. We will quote the following passage in which he certainly cannot be accused of too great softness to one of his spiritual daughters depressed at being withdrawn from his guidance :

You tell me you are sad, and that for reasons which you cannot explain. And why cannot you explain them ? you can write to me in all openness, but let me have no more moanings over my departure or allusions to the sorrow which it causes you, for it is a sorrow with which I have no sympathy. Your sorrows should only spring from the fear of offending God. What dost thou fear, O woman of little faith ? Have you not confided all which shall befall you to God ? Do you fear that He will fail you ? Instead of profiting by the time which remains to you to love God and make amends for the past, what are you doing ? Why do you complain to me that you have none to whom to pour out your griefs ? Can you not humble yourself to discover them to your confessor ? It does not content me to hear that you are always the same. If you have nothing more satisfactory to say it will be sufficient that you write to me once in six months to assure me of your continued perseverance in faith and obedience. Beyond that, unless you have anything pressing to communicate, you must not waste precious time in paying me compliments.

You should give yourself entirely to God, and fear more than death any movements of your heart which have not Him for their object. How pitiable to spend your tears in aught but testifying your love for our Lord, for how precious are tears, when, with the assistance of His grace, one single tear would suffice to extinguish the eternal flames which your sins have deserved!

It will be seen from the above, how little encouragement expressions of human attachment, however innocent might be their character, received from Father de la Colombière. The firmness, we might say the severity of his tone, though tempered by charity, was well calculated to recall to his tender-hearted correspondent, that her affection for her former director must be purely spiritual, and that their relations were entirely of a supernatural kind.

Father de la Colombière's direction was grave, serious, and eminently practical. He went straight to his end, and, expressing himself with unflinching decision, shrank not when duty required it from placing himself in conflict with the susceptibility of others. He felt that the first necessity for the efficient direction of a soul is the habit of speaking to it frankly and simply.

You are not quite right, madam [he writes], to complain of the shortness of my letters at a time when I have scarcely strength to read yours. If my last have been brief, it was that I have been in the daily expectation of seeing you, and preferred saying what I might otherwise have written. As I have not yet recovered from my late attack, you ought not to expect much of me. I must, however, reproach you with your faithlessness and the

little confidence you have in God. To hear your complaints one would think you knew not your good Lord. How often have I entreated you to confide in Him and to serve Him each day as if that were to be the last of your life! Suppose it be the will of God that you should live a hundred years. To have your will in perfect subjection to Him Whom you love, you should rejoice in your desolation, and love the nothingness in which He leaves you, for the better display of His mercy, the patience with which He suffers you and the graces with which He will assuredly endow you. Fail not in your obedience to your Mother, do nothing which could be displeasing to her. Remember that the highest virtue consists in suffering all things patiently, above all our spiritual weaknesses, and in submitting our will unreservedly to that of God. In His Name I beg your special attention to these two points, and that you will daily examine yourself in reference to them.

Well did Father de la Colombière also know how to comfort those who stood in need of his comfort and sympathy. To a Religious in spiritual distress, he addresses himself thus:

My very dear Sister, may God be to you strength and consolation in all things! So far am I from abandoning you, that my zeal for your soul's good seems to me daily to increase. I should indeed tremble at the temptations to which you are exposed, were I not firmly assured that they are the work of the devil, and have no root whatever in your heart.

It is enough for me, my dear daughter, that your confidence in God is yet unshaken and your desire to do His will as earnest as of yore; your obedience will be your salvation; never slacken in its exercise and heed

not the vain alarms for the future with which Satan tries to poison your mind. He greatly fears the completion of the sacrifice you propose making, and as, until it is actually made, he does not despair of preventing your entrance into the haven whither our Lord would lead you, ceases not to labour to prevent the riveting of the indissoluble bond which shall unite you to Christ and to His Cross.

Listen, then, my well-beloved daughter in the Heart of Jesus, to the voice of your Heavenly Father in the words which I speak to you this day in His Name. Directly you have read this letter betake yourself to the altar, where reposes that Spouse so loving and adorable, and there, without farther delay, register a vow to make your profession at the day which has been appointed. . . . Be assured, my dear child, of my affection. How could I possibly conceive an aversion to a soul whom God loves and has graciously confided to my care? Till death you will be my spiritual daughter, and, for the love of Christ, I will render all the offices of a father to you. She who brought you into the world felt for you a not more tender anxiety, than that with which God has inspired me for your salvation and sanctification.

This quotation, if a little long, must at any rate have convinced our readers of the tender and considerate affection of this holy director for the souls committed to his charge. The whole letter indeed recalls to us the words of St. Paul to the neophytes of Galatia.

In one of his letters to Mère de Saumaise, Father de la Colombière speaks of two pious young ladies who had importuned his direction, and begs her to make them understand, should that be possible, once for all, that they must select as their con-

fessor one well acquainted with their spiritual life, "for," he writes, "a constant change of directors is opposed to religious progress, and for such as are addicted to it I can do nothing, for, were I to undertake their direction, my whole time would be spent in repeating or explaining what had been said by another."

He dwells on the unprofitableness and waste of time which such tampering with the subject would entail, both on him and them, and acknowledges himself unable to understand how women who were not uneducated could find it necessary, in confessing their sins to a priest, to enter into all they did from morning to night, particularly when their life was one of rule in which most of its circumstances were provided for.

He adds that half an hour a month ought abundantly to suffice to their direction, for these daily and endless visits to their confessor are perfectly unnecessary and only resorted to as an excitement. In these many and useless conversations we lull our consciences, dissipate our thoughts, and forget God, with Whom our thoughts should be exclusively occupied. These are, indeed, golden words, whose good sense will commend them to our readers. In the same spirit he blames those who, solely from a love of change, are constantly placing themselves under some new confessor. "I see," says Father de la Colombière, "no purpose to be gained by the frequent change of a confessor ; such is but an occasion of vanity and vexation, a stumbling-block retarding our advance in sanctification. We must be careful lest, in dwelling so much on self, we come to introduce

that subject on all occasions to the exclusion of Almighty God, Who should be the sole object of our thoughts. Let us approach Him in all simplicity, without so much thought of self and desire to interest others in our private concerns."

CHAPTER XVII.

In Native Air.

1680.

ST. SYMPHORIEN, looked on as the birthplace of their race, was always dear to the members of the Colombière family ; and M. Humbert de la Colombière, though King's Counsellor at Vienne, and united by marriage to a lady of that town, often visited the paternal mansion, and passed a considerable portion of each autumn in his early home.

It was at the beginning of that season, ere the trees have lost their foliage and the garden its flowers, when the burning heat of summer has given way to the refreshing coolness of autumn, that Father de la Colombière arrived at St. Symphorien. It was pleasant to him to revisit his native country, with all its cherished memories, the old village church in which his father and mother were buried, and to meet once more the many families who in that neighbourhood were united to his own by the bonds of time-honoured friendship. Nor could any care exceed that of his affectionate brother and sister that nothing should be wanting to make his visit agreeable to their beloved and venerated guest. Still was it a sacrifice to him to leave his humble cell and the community life of his brethren, for the luxurious

abode and loving watchfulness of his relations. He accepted this change of circumstances as ordained by God, Whose will he recognized in the order of his Superior sending him to St. Symphorien, and in the words of one who was to him the interpreter of the will of Heaven as regarded himself. Blessed Margaret Mary had written as early as the previous July, commanding him on the part of her beloved Master no longer to make any plans for the future, and for the present to take charge of an invalid who was committed to his care. This sick man was himself, to forward whose recovery he was to use every possible remedy and devote his entire attention.

It was thus in submission to the will of God that Father de la Colombière came to St. Symphorien. A room adjoining the library, in which were kept the family archives, was set apart for him. It was at the remote end of the noble pile of buildings forming the Château de la Colombière, whose lofty chambers, carved furniture, and walls hung with tapestry and family portraits[1] all bespoke the refinement and luxury of seigneurial life. Father de la Colombière, true to his monastic instincts, had selected an apartment separated to some extent from the rest of the house that he might,

[1] The Hotel de la Colombière, now in the possession of the family Lombard de Buffières, has been partly rebuilt, at least in the frontage looking on the street. The apartment of Father de la Colombière has disappeared in these alterations, but we may see the door by which it communicated with the library, now transformed into a chapel containing many valuable objects and pictures of considerable merit. It possesses a chasuble worn by St. Francis de Sales and a portrait of Father de la Colombière. The ancient furniture has to a certain extent been preserved.

in what retirement was possible to him, observe the practice of his Rule. We have a description of his life at St. Symphorien d'Ozon in his own words.

I write to you from the country, where I have been carrying out a *régime* prescribed by my physicians for my health. You will see by my address that I am for the present with my family, to whom I grieve to say I am debarred from being of any edification, being forbidden by my doctors from engaging in any serious discourse. Is not this, indeed, a humiliation?

I can, however, well imagine a really humble soul finding in such a life a truly salutary purgatory. Doubtless, he made of it such to himself, although humility forbids his acknowledging it. We know how little the saints can be judged from their account of themselves. He adds: "May God be eternally praised for the infinite patience with which He has borne with me, notwithstanding my worthlessness and the imperfections which I daily discern in myself."

How did he employ his time in these his few weeks of holiday? As far as possible in keeping with the spirit of his Rule, that is to say, in prayer, in silence, and in study. His was to a remarkable degree a spirit of prayer; so habitually indeed did all his thoughts and meditations turn to God that no human motive or interest was capable of affecting him. We may then safely conclude that he made of his enforced silence an occasion of approaching God more constantly in prayer, and when his health permitted of his reading and studying, he retired into the library.

The living of St. Symphorien was at that time held by a vicar or perpetual curate, M. de Romanet, a man truly zealous for the honour of his church and the good of his people. The picture which adorns the apse was painted during his incumbency, and the high altar of fine marble erected which we still find there, and at which it is deeply interesting to reflect how often Father de la Colombière must have offered the Holy Sacrifice.

The then Rector was M. Vaury, an Oratorian priest of remarkable piety, whose memory is still venerated in the district for his many and great charities and for the extensive repairs which he effected in the parish church. This holy man and Father de la Colombière could not fail to be fast friends; they often conversed together, and entertained for each other the highest mutual esteem.

Both these ecclesiastics were frequent visitors at the Chateâu de la Colombière, where their presence was most refreshing to the invalid. The townspeople respectfully saluted Father Claude as he passed along their streets, and many a glance of pity and affection followed his steps. Many of them remembered him as a child and as a young man, and grieved to see him now so pale, so feeble, and so wan. The history of the late events in England, his sufferings and captivity, were related, not doubtless without many an imaginative addition, and he was looked on as a saint, and his presence as an exceptional honour to the district.

The Father himself, mild and affable as was his wont, received these marks of affection and sympathy with a charming modesty, always replying to the inquiries made for his health in some

few and simple words, which never omitted a reference to higher things. His resigned and suffering countenance, on which the constant habit of prayer had imprinted a Divine reflex, wore an expression quite angelic, and many mothers as he passed begged his blessing on their babes.

Condrien is not far from St. Symphorien d'Ozon. A couple of hours' walk brings us to Vienne, and having crossed the Rhone, the pedestrian arrives in three quarters of an hour at Condrien, pleasantly situated in a semicircle of hills covered with world-renowned vineyards. Sister Margaret Elisabeth, a nun in the Convent of the Visitation, soon heard of her brother's arrival at St. Symphorien, and wrote to beg he would come and see her at Condrien. The Father, seeing in this proposal an opportunity for ministerial work, accepted the invitation. He was able to address a few words of edification to the community, who received him with the utmost cordiality. It was shortly after this visit that his sister again wrote to him, and having inquired after his health, begs him, perhaps for some *fête* or religious exercises, to make a second expedition to Condrien. His reply has been preserved to us.

I thank you for the affection which prompts your remembrance of me, and for which I hope the Lord may reward you, seeing you have nothing to look to from my gratitude. You ask after my health, a subject about which it is not worth troubling you, it being of little consequence to others, and perhaps a stumbling-block to myself. Pray God, I entreat you, that ill or well I may faithfully respond to the designs of His mercy. You, my dear sister, be you a great saint and

make a better use of your gifts than I have done of mine. Love God and serve Him for yourself and for me. Often offer to Him my heart with yours, and pray His acceptance of my vain aspirations for perfection and for the conversion of the whole world.

The reader will not require that we should draw his attention to the beauty of this fraternal love, thus vivified by the flame of heavenly charity. In this his constant desire for the acquisition of fresh merits herein so earnestly expressed, Father de la Colombière discloses to us one of the secrets of his heart. Being no longer able to work, he incessantly offered to the Lord his sufferings, and multiplied his prayers and aspirations for the greater glory of his Lord and the sanctification of souls. And God, Who rewards the intentions of His servants as freely as their deeds, and Who, reading the depths of the heart, rejoices over the secret sacrifices which are made to Him, lent a gracious ear to the supplications of His servant.

Believe me, my dear sister [he continues], my absence will not be prejudicial to you; you will always find our dear Lord present to you when you sincerely seek Him, and where He is all else is superfluous. I see but little prospect of my being able to be with you at the time you propose, but, whatever satisfaction you may have hoped from my visit, you know we must sacrifice all to the Divine will, and that the opportunity of making this sacrifice is of far greater value than any advantage which my coming could secure. Commend me to God I entreat of you. Present my respects to your Reverend Mother and Sisters. I was greatly edified by their piety, but their charity and modesty were a humiliation to me.

In another letter to his sister, the Father excuses himself for not having been at home on the arrival of a messenger bringing him news from Condrien. He speaks with warm admiration of his niece Margaret, saying that she daily became more saint-like, and was a source of great contentment to him.

"I trust," he adds, "that our Lord has chosen her as His servant, for her dispositions seem most excellent. Adieu, my dear sister, the whole family greets you lovingly."[1] These words, "the whole family," show that M. and Madame Humbert de la Colombière were still at St. Symphorien with their four children, Joseph, Jean Baptiste, Margaret, and Mary Magdalen; this last was but a little creature barely out of her mother's arms.

Father de la Colombière had a particular affection for his brother Humbert, a man of devout and solid piety. His sister-in-law, as amiable as she was religious, treated him with the utmost affection. It was during this his last residence in the country, that an interesting episode occurred, of which we will give some details as helping still further to pourtray him in his character of director of souls.

[1] The nuns of the Convent of the Visitation at Condrien retain a pious remembrance of Father de la Colombière. His name was pronounced amongst them with veneration, and in a manuscript of the seventeenth century, already quoted, we read these words: "The devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is greatly on the increase, especially in our community. The labours of the great servant of God, Father de la Colombière, contributed much to its establishment amongst us, and it is with the greatest satisfaction we perceive it spreading in all the houses of our Order."

It is yet a consolation to the daughters of St. Francis de Sales, who inhabit this ancient monastery, to recall that Father de la Colombière often officiated and preached in this very chapel.

When last we heard of Mademoiselle Rosalie de Lyonne she was yet resisting the inward grace which was urging her to embrace the religious life. Shortly after, Blessed Margaret Mary, having been again assured by our Lord that this soul must be His at any cost, communicated His will to Father de la Colombière, entreating him to urge his influence to that effect. The Father instantly wrote to Mademoiselle de Lyonne, informing her that she must, without further delay, prepare herself to make a great sacrifice which God expected of her, and which he hoped to be able to communicate to her himself. Dreading what the sacrifice might be, his correspondent thought she would die of fright, but nerved herself to prepare for the coming trial. Accompanied by one of her brothers, she instantly started for the Château de la Colombière, and threw herself on her knees before the holy priest, declaring that she was prepared to make any sacrifice he might require of her. Father de la Colombière was delighted at her courage and prompt submission, and replied with an expression of countenance truly divine: "If our Lord demanded you as His spouse, could you meditate a refusal?" She could only exclaim, "Oh, my Father!" "My daughter," he continued, "could you refuse such an honour, could you refuse Jesus Christ?" At these words all her repugnance vanished, and, with her heart overflowing with consolations she vowed and consecrated herself to the Lord and started on her return to Paray.

On the way back, her soul was transported with joy, and she exclaimed: "If it is sweet but to hear

the voice of him whom one loves, what must it be, O my Lord, to possess Thee for eternity!" and then to mark her detachment from all external things and her fixed determination to obey the Divine call, she addressed herself to the works of nature from which she would be separated in giving up the world. "Adieu," she said, "adieu, fresh and limpid streams; adieu, sunny meadows and peaceful fields; adieu, little birds ever hymning your Creator's presence, for I shall see, I shall hear, you no more." Full of holy ardour she returned to her mother, who was greatly astonished at the change which had come over her. Mademoiselle de Lyonne confessed later that she had been unaware of the length of the drive on that occasion, so absorbed was she in the contemplation of heavenly things.

A great step towards the accomplishment of the Divine will in this young lady had now been made, but the work was yet incomplete. Her mother's opposition barred the way, and she fell back into her former state of hesitation, and violence had almost to be resorted to ere she could be induced to bid her final adieu to the world. At length, however, she resigned herself to the will of her dear Lord, Whose patience had survived so long a resistance, and her pious director had the happiness of witnessing her complete submission to her heavenly vocation. The holidays were now drawing to a close, and the time for Father de la Colombière's return to Lyons approached. These few weeks' residence in the country had produced a considerable improvement in his health. The pure and balmy air, the healing fragrance of woods

and flowers, had allayed the habitual irritation of the lungs. Perhaps, had his stay been prolonged, or had he taken up his abode for some years in the country, a radical cure might have been effected. From the beginning of the illness the unanimous opinion of his doctors had been that such a course was his only real hope of recovery. But to Father Claude, the life of perfection was dearer than health, and he who was never so well content as when inhabiting one of the houses of his Order, left the valley of Ozon without regret to resume his avocations at Lyons.

He had remarked in meditating on the history of our Lord how the lowliest actions of life were hallowed by the interior spirit, and therefore felt that restricted as for the future might be his sphere of work, an abundant source of sanctification and merit yet remained open to him, even in the life to which the state of his health condemned him. None but the interior paths of holiness now were in his power, since the means of making himself useful to others were forbidden him. He therefore devoted himself with redoubled ardour and great fixity of intention to the practice of such acts of devotion as were possible to him. Often prostrated at the foot of his crucifix, he exclaimed with all the powers of his soul: "O my adorable Redeemer, I give myself to Thee without reserve, and in the fullest possible manner. For long years have I been, as it were, nailed to Thy Cross by the vows of my profession; these I now renew and ratify in the presence of Heaven and of earth. A thousand times I thank Thee for having permitted me to pronounce them. I protest that to me they are

not burdensome, on the contrary, willingly would I multiply and draw them closer around me. O my Divine Saviour, what hinders that I should bind myself to Thee so nearly, as not only never to be separated from Thee, but that I should become one, as it were, with Thee? I unite myself for ever, O my God, to Thy beloved Cross, and protest that in it only shall be, until death, my glory and my joy. *Mihi absit gloriari, nisi in Cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi, per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo.* Far from me be all pleasure and all praise, which I find not in Jesus and in Him crucified. Far from me be all treasure but His poverty, all delight but in His suffering, all love but in Himself. Never, O my God and my all, can I attach myself to any created thing, never can I be separated from Thee."

Truly in his weak and suffering state was Father de la Colombière united to Jesus crucified. The Passion of his Saviour was the constant object of his meditations, and in proportion as he conformed himself to the Divine model was he transfigured and elevated in a higher degree of holiness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Prediction of Death.

1681.

ONE by one the hopes which a return to his native land had inspired for the recovery of Father de la Colombière vanished. Heavy fogs, a cold winter, and the little care the invalid could be induced to take of himself, all these resulted in a serious relapse which greatly alarmed his friends.

The Blessed Margaret Mary was little likely to forget her venerated Father under these circumstances. For him she prayed and recommended him to the prayers of her friends, until at length the Lord's designs upon His servant were revealed to her.

The will of God [she wrote to Mother de Saumaise] is accomplishing itself in the sufferings of the Rev. Father de la Colombière, for, whilst recommending him to the Divine tenderness, I was reminded that the servant was not greater than his Master, nor could any position be more advantageous to him than that of following the steps of his Lord. We all know how much Father de la Colombière did for the glory of God in the days of his strength; but in reality (for every state has its uses in the Divine economy) his sickness redounds more to the honour of his Lord than did his

health. There is a time to work, and a time to suffer; a time to sow, another to tend and water, and to this last employment Father de la Colombière is at present called. The Lord delights to put an inestimable price on the sufferings of His servant by uniting them with His own, and distributing them as dew over the seed which with so much diligence was sown in many hearts, making the sower himself thereby to grow and increase in love. Let us, then, submit ourselves, my dear Mother, with joy to the Divine decrees, and confess, hard and crushing as may be our present trial, that the Lord is good and right in all His doings, worthy at all times of our highest praise and love.

These wise and beautiful words contain the answer to a question which our narrative at this point naturally suggests. Wherefore did our Lord, seeing the scarcity of labourers and the necessitous state of souls, deprive His vineyard of the services of Father de la Colombière, who might have been spared to so long a course of usefulness? Such an inquiry springs to our lips, but our Lord's ways are not our ways, and to the great advantage of Father de la Colombière his sickness did not abate. His state of weakness was adding jewels to his crown, whilst God, not unmindful of his ardent desire to devote himself to the good of souls, showered, in reward for his sufferings, innumerable graces on the scenes of his labours; thus enabling him by the sweet mystery of transmitted merit to work more for the conversion of England in sickness than he had ever accomplished in health.

Our Lord rejoiced over these proofs of the purity and disinterestedness of his love, and valued at an inestimable price sufferings borne with so great

patience. This heavenly testimony to the holiness of Father de la Colombière reveals to us the greatness of his merits. Happy did he think himself thus to live and die for God.

A few words have been transmitted to us written by himself at this time, which tell of the state of suffering now habitual to him. "I am never free," he says, "from my troublesome cough, nor from the severe oppression of my chest. They have their variations, being sometimes a little better, sometimes worse. I am afraid to leave the house, and cannot speak above my breath; my appetite, however, is good, and in other respects I am fairly well."

The doctors, baffled in all their measures, advised a change of residence, and he was sent to Paray, in the hope that the mild and pure air of that valley might be of service to him. He arrived there in August, 1681. It was in answer to no expressed wish of his own that Father de la Colombière found himself once more at Paray, but he failed not to thank the Fatherly care which had permitted him to revisit a place so full to him of dear and pious memories. On arriving he was strong enough to take a few walks, enjoying the beautiful autumn weather and benefiting by the healthiness of the air. He had also the consolation of again offering the Adorable Sacrifice in the Chapel of the Visitation, and of renewing his consecration to the Sacred Heart of his Saviour in that sanctuary which had witnessed so marvellous a manifestation of Divine love.

He afterwards betook himself to the convent to pay his respects to the holy daughters of St. Francis

de Sales, and in a voice scarcely raised above a whisper addressed to them a few words of consolation and advice. If but little breath was left him, that little burned more and more with the love of God. It was on this occasion that he again met Mlle. de Lyonne, in whom the grace of God had obtained so complete a victory. A year had elapsed since she had promised Father de la Colombière to enter the Convent of the Visitation, but in the meanwhile, her mother declaring that nothing should ever induce her to consent to be separated from her daughter, the young lady, whose repugnance to the religious life had revived, easily reconciled herself to an enforced residence in the world. When, however, it was revealed to Blessed Margaret Mary that our Lord designed Mlle. de Lyonne for Himself in the life of the cloister, the Mother Superior instantly sent for her, intimated to her the Divine will, and entreated her to enter the convent without another moment's hesitation, and without even apprising her mother of the fact. She obeyed at once, and entered the door of the cloister, assuring a lady who had accompanied her to the convent, that so great was her repugnance to so doing that she would as soon have stepped into Purgatory. Her only consolation was the belief that a fortnight of the life would kill her; she lived, however, to find herself most happily and completely deceived. She found in the Sisters, whose countenances bespoke their happiness, very charming companions, in birth and education not at all inferior to herself. Her only trial was the continued opposition of her mother, who refused to see her until she was professed.

On the day on which she pronounced her vows, Sister Mary Rosalie experienced the infinite sweetness of the Divine consolations. So great was her joy at finding herself thus consecrated to the Lord, that she could not refrain from giving Him audible thanks. She was seen, when thinking herself alone, to kiss the walls of her cell and of the monastery. To her the cloister was as it were a terrestrial Paradise. Religious observances had no difficulties for her, and so dear the Rule soon became to her, that she would have grieved to infringe its slightest injunction, and so prompt was her obedience to the call of the bell, that on one occasion she left Father de la Colombière abruptly on hearing it sound.

Her pious director was greatly edified by the change he found in her, and at the advance which this child of his many cares and prayers had made in the Christian life. A fortnight later, on seeing her again, he exclaimed: "O my daughter, with what joy do I find you a spouse of Christ!" To which she answered: "My Father, our Lord has indeed been very good to me." Both remained for a few moments without speaking, words being too weak to express their gratitude for the marvels of the Divine grace. Father de la Colombière was the first to break this expressive silence, and assuring her of the joy he felt in finding her vocation thus established, dismissed her with his blessing.

We know not that they ever met again, for soon after this Father de la Colombière lost all the little strength which it had given his friends so much encouragement to see him regain. He was confined

to the house and unable to breathe except in his room, where a fire was kept constantly burning. His weakness was so great that he was obliged to be dressed and undressed, being unable to do anything for himself.

The greatest care was taken of him, everything that the solicitude of his pious and charitable townsmen could suggest for his comfort, was, through their bounty, at his disposal. He could only complain of the excess of their kindness. It was hoped that the return of spring might effect some favourable change in his health, but this idea, with which some of his friends thought to revive his spirits, was but illusory, and it soon became evident that it was not the will of God he should recover.

The Blessed Margaret Mary, who could never be unmindful of the holy director, whose piety was better known to her than to any one, wrote at this time as follows to Mère de Saumaise:

I conveyed to Father de la Colombière the message with which you charged me in your last letter. It gave him much pleasure, as affording him an opportunity of receiving some intelligence of one whom he assures me he could never forget. He continues very ill. Should he become a little better he will write to you. I have seen him twice, he converses with much difficulty; perhaps God has so arranged it, that He may be able to speak more abundantly to his heart.

The graceful thought expressed in this last line is worthy of the chosen handmaid of the Sacred Heart. She ceased not to supplicate Heaven on behalf of her sick friend, but could not but remark, that the more earnestly she solicited his recovery

the worse he became. One day, when he had been able to be moved to the parlour, she said to him, "Our Lord has revealed to me that were you to recover, you would doubtless glorify Him by your zeal, but in your sickness He glorifies Himself in you." This was said, not as a promise that God was about to effect his recovery, but as an encouragement to him to suffer. At the same time she engaged him to take all possible care of his health, and even advised him to give up celebrating Mass, as he had heretofore been accustomed, during the octave of St. Francis Xavier, and to content himself for the present with his daily Communion. We can picture to ourselves the deep interest which all Paray took in the health of Father de la Colombière. We know the intimate relations which had formerly existed between him and every class of society in that town, whose inhabitants, highly appreciating his sanctity and deeply sensible of the benefits they owed him, were now full of anxiety on his account. Many betook themselves to the Saint of the Visitation, to implore her prayers for the restoration to health of one who, were life spared him, might yet do so much good amongst them. The holy nun had but one answer for all such applicants, "Let us pray, but let us also adore the Divine will."

Others obtained admission to the Father himself, and warmly expressed their respect and devotion. Father de la Colombière received them with gentle cordiality, showing himself touched at the affectionate regard which had prompted their visit. He seemed, however, to listen with indifference to the expression of their wishes for his recovery, and

simply said, "It may be that God may restore me to health to punish me for the little use I have made of sickness. His holy will be done."

To his intimate friends, he showed himself most anxious to secure their observance of the pious practices which our Lord had taught to the Blessed Margaret Mary, the Devotion of the Holy Hour, the Communion of the first Friday in every month, and above all, the Festival of the Friday after the Octave of the Blessed Sacrament. He had, he said, learned from a deeply religious person that special graces were attached to the observance of these devotions. Unto the very end did he show himself the faithful Apostle of the Sacred Heart. His health now declined so rapidly, that nothing but a miracle could have saved him, and it soon became evident that God did not intend his recovery, and that death was probably not far distant. Every day was apparently bringing him nearer the grave, and it was thought well to apprize M. Humbert de la Colombière of his brother's state, who, immediately on receiving the sad intelligence, hastened to Paray.

At the sight of one he so loved and venerated reduced to such a state of weakness, M. Humbert was greatly affected. He could not restrain his tears, and it devolved on Father de la Colombière to find the courage necessary for the occasion. His brother's tender affection was not to be satisfied without making a final effort to save him. M. Humbert strongly urged on P. Bourguignet, Superior of the Jesuits, and on Dr. Billet, their physician, the necessity of a change of climate, insisting on the benefit which his brother derived

from his native air in a previous stage of his illness. He concluded by saying that it was only right the experiment should be made, if not with an expectation of cure, at any rate with the hope of giving some relief to the sufferer, at the same time offering to take his brother to St. Symphorien himself. Dr. Billet, who had from the first placed his strongest hopes of his patient's recovery in a change of climate, and had wished him to try the effect of a residence, not of months but of years, in a high and healthy locality, where nature might have an opportunity of repairing the injured tissue of the lungs, was therefore now most anxious to urge on Father de la Colombière the adoption of M. Humbert's plan. Father Bourguignet, who throughout this trying time had been so full of tenderness and devotion to the invalid, approved the suggestion, and, pained as he was at the prospect of the separation which its execution would entail, began to plan such arrangements as should make the journey as little painful as possible. Two things were necessary for this—fine weather and a commodious carriage ; and to God's kind Providence they looked to provide them with both. Father de la Colombière agreed to the change, should it be permitted by the Father Provincial. He had always felt with Dr. Billet that a drier and purer air would be best for him. The climate of Lyons had not suited him ; that of Vienne or St. Symphorien was, he thought, more likely to be beneficial.

But before asking permission for his journey, he was anxious to consult one of his spiritual daughters, an extremely pious young lady living

in Paray, on the subject, and with the humility of a true saint he wrote to her as follows: "Do me the kindness to tell me what you think of this matter, and what you believe to be the will of God, that my conscience may be at ease, and that if I die I may feel I have not broken my vow."

He still, as we see, maintained the perfect observance of his Rule, and his sensitive conscience was alive to the fear of any infringement, even in things permitted and indispensable to his sickness. It was indeed a trial to him that the alarming state of his health necessitated his asking to be removed from his present abode. He added a few words to his note expressive of his gratitude to Father du Port, begging him to excuse the weakness which prevented his doing so in a separate letter to himself.

Mlle. de Bisefrand asked her Reverend Father's permission to communicate his proposed departure to Sister Margaret Mary, knowing well the high esteem in which he held her, and what was his confidence in her advice.

Only the year before, when Mlle. de Bisefrand was lamenting his departure for London, he had consoled her by promising to introduce her to a nun of the Visitation "whose opinion," he said, "you may follow as if it were mine, since I go to her for advice in my own affairs." Father de la Colombière was most willing that Sister Margaret Mary should be consulted on this subject, and waited to learn what the Lord would command him by the mouth of His faithful servant. The journey was fixed for the next day, the 29th of January, not much time therefore intervened. The

Blessed Margaret Mary received Mlle. Bisefrand's note, asking her advice as to Father de la Colombière's departure. For a moment she was absorbed in thought, and then replied, "I beg him not to leave Paray if, without infringing the orders of his Superior, he can remain."

On receiving this message from his spiritual daughter, Father de la Colombière dictated a few lines, asking her the motive of her decision. To which she returned an answer: "He has said to me that it is here that He wills to accept the sacrifice of your life." After this prophetic intimation Father de la Colombière deemed it his duty to ask permission of his Superiors to prolong his stay at Paray. He had well understood Who it was of Whom Sister Margaret Mary had said that *He* wished him to finish his course there. It was evidently the will of God that the Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ should breathe his last sigh near to that sanctuary where, so few years before, our Lord had appointed him the director of a chosen soul, and where, overflowing with Divine consolations, he had consecrated himself with irrevocable vow to the Sacred Heart.

It was in the designs of God that his hallowed remains were for a long time to rest by the side of those of Blessed Margaret Mary, and we may hope that they also, as well as hers, are to have their day of glorification, for the honour of the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER XIX.

Last Hours and Death.

THE Superiors of Father de la Colombière were quite willing that he should remain at Paray. The holy man, therefore, thanked his brother for his affectionate proposal, but explained his necessity of declining it, since the desire of God had been revealed that he should end his days in the town where he was then living. M. Humbert had too much faith and piety to oppose a determination which was the expression of the Divine will, and bade his brother farewell with the feeling that he should never see him again, notwithstanding a promise from the Superior that he should be immediately warned on any appearance of an increase of danger. The Father's one thought was now to prepare himself with the greatest care for his last journey. He had nothing to fear in death, having always lived the life of a true Religious, that is to say, of one dead to the world and to himself.

What cause had he for alarm? No human being twice passes the mortal agony, and his life had been but one long death. His soul, mistress of the body she animated, had lived in closest union with God, and was now about to quit her mortal tenement, and hailed the hour of her deliverance with joy.

A few days after the departure of M. Humbert de la Colombière, a grave relapse aggravated the sick man's condition, and a recurrence of spitting of blood exhausted the little strength that remained to him. We will transport ourselves in imagination to the room occupied by the sick man. It is indeed a monastic cell, poverty and simplicity its only ornaments.[1] The Father either stretched out on his humble couch or seated in a rude arm-chair, accepts, with the docility of a child, the services of the Brother Infirmarian. Obedience to the physician and infirmarian during illness is a part of the Rule of the Society, which Father de la Colombière had no temptation to infringe, too thankful to find yet in his present state an opportunity for the submission to which he had so solemnly promised himself before God. A Jesuit must obey till his latest breath, and should be able to say with Blessed Peter Favre: "It is not necessary to live, but it is necessary to obey." The gentleness of manner which was so characteristic of the dear invalid never forsook him to the last, and he received the attentions and care bestowed on him with infinite sweetness and gratitude, heartily thanking his brethren for their affectionate solicitude. He apologized with much humility and feeling to the Father Superior for the trouble his illness occasioned in the house, and always greeted his devoted physician, Dr. Billet, who never concealed from him his critical state, with a smile.

[1] The house of the Jesuits still exists, in the possession of the noble family of D——. Great changes in the building have been made, and it is not known now which was Father de la Colombière's cell. The chapel alone remains much in its former state.

Little need is there indeed to conceal the approach of death from a saint. Among the few who were admitted to his room of those who came to be edified by the sight of so peaceful a death-bed, was the venerable Curé of Paray. That faithful friend had had innumerable opportunities of appreciating the virtues of one who had never failed to encourage him amidst many trials and difficulties to devote himself to the people committed to his charge. Some members of the congregation were also permitted to see their beloved Father; they mournfully gazed on that well-known face, still wearing an expression of deep calm, though greatly changed from the sufferings he had undergone. He had the aspect of one habitually in the presence of God, before Whom his heart was continually in adoration, while his lips continually moved in prayer.

For long had the state to which death reduces us been the subject of his meditations, and having fortified himself by a complete and universal detachment from the things of earth, he had nothing to fear from the moment of final separation. What joy for him when the dread visitor should arrive, to have so lived that he could welcome death as a release!

He had always, and particularly since his long retreat, cultivated a feeling of entire confidence in God, and had declared that before dying he should collect all his sins, known or unknown, remembered or forgotten, and cast them at the feet of Jesus, there to be consumed in the fire of His love. "The greater their number," said he, "the more grievous their malice, the greater will be my anxiety to

present them, as standing in deeper need of the boundlessness of His mercy. Nothing will then be left me that I can do for the glory of God than this, and, entertaining the vast idea that has been revealed to me of the goodness of God, I shall have no difficulty in bringing myself to do that which so commends itself to my trust in Him."

To many of our readers this sublime expression of unlimited confidence in God, a God of mercy and of love, will recall the passage in the Psalms, wherein David, the kingly penitent, extols the eternal goodness in eloquent themes of hope and joy: "*Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin, for it is great*" —*Propitiaberis peccato, multum est enim.*[1] Doubtless must we say with holy Job: "*Man cannot be justified compared with God;*"[2] no created thing can stand before Infinite Holiness, and the remembrance of the past and fears for the future have troubled the last moments of many a dying saint, for confidence is a gift of God not bestowed on all. To Father de la Colombière, however, this gift had been accorded, and he welcomed with unwavering confidence the fatherland to which his Lord was calling him. Nor did the retrospect of life afford him any cause for alarm—love casteth out fear.

His youth had been one of innocence, and, since he entered the religious state, his only thought and desire had been to purify his soul and reach on unto perfection. He had devoted himself unreservedly to the labours of his apostleship, had offered himself for martyrdom, and if he did not shed his blood for the faith, had confessed it in

[1] Psalm xxiv. 11. [2] Job ix. 3.

captivity and bonds. About to die an early death, worn out like St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis Regis with the labours and mortifications of a life-long martyrdom, he accepted this sacrifice of self with unflinching devotion. Had he not said in times gone by: "Health and life are indifferent to me, but gladly shall I welcome sickness or death, for precious will they be to me should they come as the result of my labours for souls"? Can we now wonder at the peace which filled the soul of this dying saint? But the hour of deliverance had arrived. The fever became more intense, and fierce pains borne with exemplary patience took the place of his former state of languor. He never complained, his soul was at one with God, his eyes fixed upon the crucifix. The words of faith and hope uttered in his presence by his brethren seemed greatly to console and strengthen him as answering to the deepest feelings of his heart. He took his chaplet in his hands, and though too weak to pronounce the words, his intention evidently followed the recital. His intellect was unclouded to the last, and his speaking eyes abundantly expressed his thanks to those who had surrounded him with affectionate care during his illness. Of these, like a true Religious, he asked pardon for the bad example he had given them by his life, while he earnestly commended himself to the prayers of the community. He received the last sacraments with unspeakable devotion, and absorbed in the love of the dear Saviour, Who had committed to his charge the abundant treasures of the Sacred Heart, expired on the breast of his Divine Master, experiencing in that awful hour the verity of his

own remark in the "Spiritual Retreats:" "By those only who have given themselves wholly to God, may peace be expected on the bed of death."

Such, on February 15, 1682, in the forty-first year of his age, and twenty-second of his religious life, was the end of one of the most illustrious members of the Society of Jesus. Had his life been prolonged, he could not have failed to acquire that celebrity which posterity always accords to real talent, but his was the far higher glory which God reserves for holy and heroic souls. Mademoiselle de Bisefrand, whose filial piety was always deeply interested in all that concerned Father de la Colombière, was one of the first persons to hear of his death, of which she at once informed Blessed Margaret Mary. The saint on hearing of the event, exclaimed in anguish: "Pray, and entreat others to pray for him." It was at five o'clock in the morning that the sad news was communicated to her; at ten, she wrote the following note to Mademoiselle de Bisefrand: "Weep for him no longer, rather pray to him and fear nothing, for truly he is more powerful to assist you than ever."

When her Superior showed her surprise that she did not ask permission to perform extra penances and engage in extra prayers on behalf of Father de la Colombière, as had been her habit for other deceased persons, Margaret Mary calmly and gently said: "My dear Mother, he does not need them, being highly placed in Heaven by the goodness and mercy of the Sacred Heart; he is in a position to pray for us rather than we for him. It was to satisfy for some neglect in his exercises of Divine

love that his soul was deprived of the sight of God from the moment it quitted the body until the corpse was deposited in the tomb." Mother Greyfié, who relates the above, speaking of the effect produced on Sister Margaret Mary by the death of Father de la Colombière, says: "It was a terrible blow to her, for the dear Sister lost in him the best friend she had in the world. For him, however, she did not grieve, since she loved her friends not for herself, but for the glory of God and their advancement in Divine love. I never heard her regret him, but often heard her rejoice over his happiness, in which she took part by giving thanks to the Sacred Heart for all the graces and benedictions showered on her departed friend in his life and in his death." Father de la Colombière experienced in dying the truth of Blessed Margaret Mary's words, "It is sweet to die after a life-long devotion to Him Who will be our Judge." And now he realized the happiness of his heavenly home. "He was in a good place," wrote the saint, rejoicing in his joy; "and is more powerful than ever to help those who invoke his assistance." Although for some hours after his death the soul of Father de la Colombière was detained from the light and enjoyment of God, this could by no means interfere with his attaining the high place appointed him in the abodes of bliss. His short stay in Purgatory is easily explained when we remember the generous surrender he had made in favour of suffering souls of all satisfactory merit, but this momentary detention at the portals of Paradise, with its necessary deprivation of the Beatific Vision, in no wise diminishes our apprecia-

tion of his virtues or belief in the greatness of their reward. As a soldier who has gallantly performed his duties loses none of his rights to a glorious recompense by any delay in the hour of receiving it, the soul of Father de la Colombière lost in this purgatorial passage none of her claims to the hardly earned reward. Besides, we know how possible it is that certain souls, after long purification in expiatory flames, may one day possess greater joy, greater glory, and fuller powers than others admitted to the celestial realm immediately on quitting the body. The spirit of a little child, dying after baptism, is received into Heaven, but having but small merit, it aspires not to great reward.

The premature death of Father de la Colombière excited general sorrow. Paray wept for him as for its Apostle, religious communities lamented a benevolent and enlightened director, the poor regretted their benefactor, the people one whom they revered as a saint. The whole town, so to speak, came to kneel around his remains as they lay in the chapel of the convent. Many hastened to touch his body with their crucifixes, rosaries, and other objects of piety, and it seemed as if the population would never weary of gazing on that face, which, though shrunk in death, was radiant with celestial light. The magistrates of the town assembled in council, discussed the propriety of erecting a monument at the public expense, in which the remains of this venerated man should be deposited, but the members of the Society of Jesus would not allow the body of one whom God had given them as an example and protector to be

taken from their care. It was not, however, for them to prevent the immense gatherings of persons of every class which gave the funeral of Father de la Colombière the appearance of a triumph. It seemed rather the offering of public honours to the sacred body of a saint, than the bearing of the remains of a poor Religious to his last home, which that day filled the streets of Paray with a silent multitude. In spite, however, of the sorrow of the people in losing him who was to them an object of so great a reverence, a feeling of joy pervaded every heart, each in the midst of his mourning was consoled and happy in the thought of the bliss of the enfranchised soul, and in the hope for himself of having gained another mediator in Heaven. These universal signs of the affection and respect in which his brother had been held greatly softened the blow to M. Humbert de la Colombière, who, although arriving too late to find him whom he loved alive, was in time to assist at the funeral, and collected and treasured with religious care all that had belonged to the deceased.[1]

The body of Father de la Colombière was not interred in the common vault of the community, but buried separately, where five or six years afterwards it was exhumed, and removed to the new chapel the Jesuits had just built.

It may excite surprise that it was possible to exhume a body that had been buried for some

[1] These objects, transported to St. Symphorien, were some instruments of penance, an iron discipline and an iron chain with points, a double reliquary, the seal he used in England, and his crucifix. These were carefully treasured by his great-nephews. Their successors in the mansion of La Colombière preserved them as objects of piety.

years, but the mode of interment then in vogue allowed of its being done without difficulty. Quicklime, spread in quantities over the corpse before the closing of the coffin, quickly consumed the flesh, and in a short time nothing but the bones remained.[1] It was owing to this having been done that, as we learn from a letter of Blessed Margaret Mary, it became possible to distribute his remains.[2]

I am rejoiced [she writes to Mother de Saumaise] to think that you will possess some relics of Father de la Colombière, whose body the reverend Jesuit Fathers have placed in their new church. They have presented to us, but it is a great secret, one of his ribs and his girdle. These I am willing to share with you, knowing you will guard them carefully, as becomes the esteem in which you hold that great servant of the Lord.

This sacred trust remained in the hands of the brethren till the evil day when the Society of Jesus was dispersed, and its members driven from their homes. Before leaving that abode, sanctified by the memory of the remains of this holy man, before quitting the city of the Sacred Heart, where the sons of St. Ignatius had received that apostolate so dear to their souls, the Superior, kneeling before the shrine, kissed it with deep devotion, the

[1] Not long since the vault in which his remains were originally placed was to be seen. The new chapel contained the chest in which were his bones.

[2] It seems that his remains were widely distributed, either at the time of the first exhumation or in the years which succeeded it. For in the verification of the body made on July 3, 1865, it was found that all the ribs and many of the vertebræ were absent. With these exceptions, the body was entire.

whole community doing so after him, and then, with a breaking heart, had it secretly conveyed to the Convent of the Visitation. The nuns, warned of its coming, received it with filial piety into their mortuary vault, placing the remains of the Father next to those of Blessed Margaret Mary. The daughters of the Visitation religiously guarded their holy charge, and when for them also dark days came, and the tempest of the Revolution swept them from their peaceful home, they entrusted the precious relics in faithful hands. The Society of Jesus can never forget this service rendered by the nuns of the Visitation to one of her sons, and to make known their generous devotion is to pay only a small tribute of gratitude in return. The lowly wooden shrine still reposes in the shade of the good Sisters' cloister, for though the Jesuits have come back to Paray, they have as yet no chapel in which to receive their brother's remains. Best it is, however, perhaps that they should be for the moment shrouded from a public homage, which might militate against the regular processes of beatification. But there is nought to impede the confidence with which the faithful may invoke Father Claude de la Colombière, and we look forward to a not far distant future, when the Sovereign Pontiff, acceding to the prayers of the Church of France, the Bishops of every Catholic country, and the peoples of universal Christendom, will place him who was the privileged Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, together with Blessed Margaret Mary, on the altars of the Church.

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